

ELECTION COVERAGE, PAGES 6-8

# THE INDYPENDENT

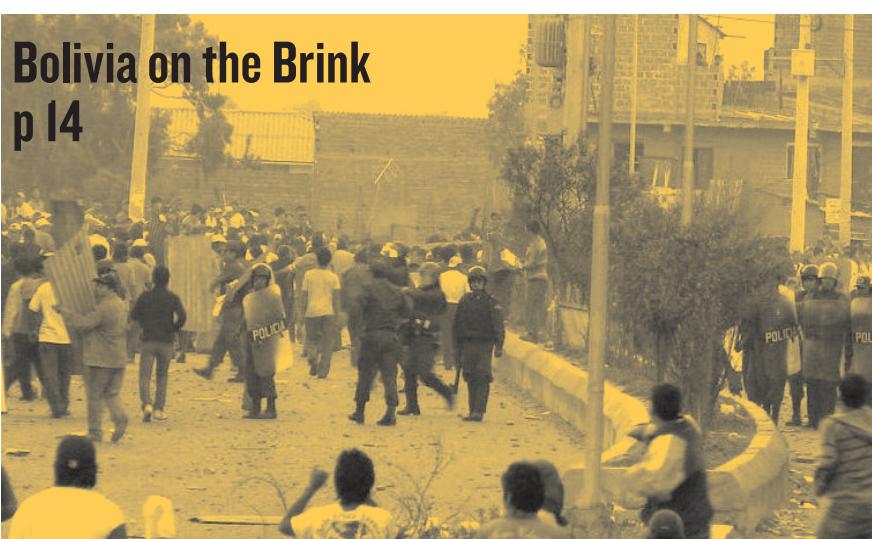
ISSUE #126, OCTOBER 3 - OCTOBER 23, 2008  
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

## Way To Go, Wall Street!

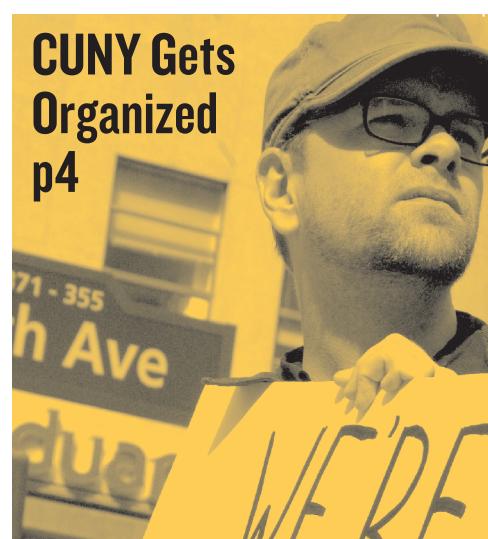
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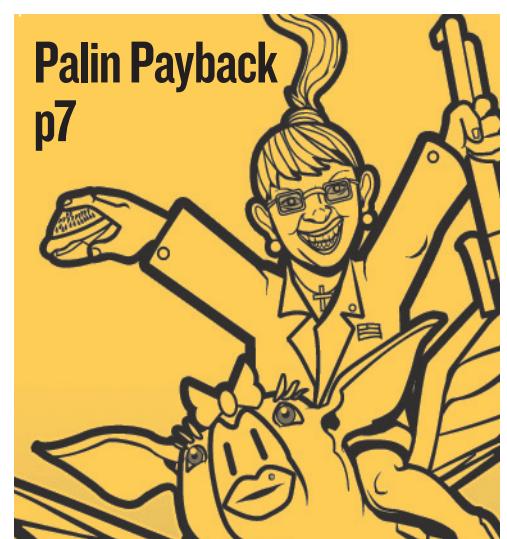
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The *Indy* is a New York-based free newspaper published 17 times a year on Fridays. Since 2000, more than 600 citizen journalists, artists and media activists have contributed their time and energy to this project. Winner of dozens of New York Independent Press Association awards, *The Indy* is dedicated to empowering people to create a true alternative to the corporate press by encouraging citizens to produce their own media. *The Indy* is funded by subscriptions, donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising from organizations with similar missions. Volunteers write and edit articles, take photographs, do design work and illustrations, help distribute papers, update the website and more! *The Indy* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

*The Indy* is the newspaper project of the New York City Independent Media Center, which is affiliated with the global Indymedia movement ([indymedia.org](http://indymedia.org)), an international network that is dedicated to fostering grassroots media production. NYC IMC sponsors three other projects, the children's newspaper *IndyKids*, the *IndyVideo* news team and the NYC IMC open publishing website ([nyc.indymedia.org](http://nyc.indymedia.org)). NYC IMC relies on volunteer participation and is open to anyone who is interested.

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## community calendar

# OCTOBER

Please send event announcements to [indyevents@gmail.com](mailto:indyevents@gmail.com). The next open editorial meetings for *The Indy* are Tuesday, Oct. 7, and Oct. 28, at 7pm at 4 W 43rd St, Room 311. All are welcome.

#### TUE OCT 7

6pm-8pm • FREE

DISCUSSION: HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE A PROBLEM? BEING YOUNG AND ARAB IN AMERICA. Moustafa Bayoumi's new book examines what it's like being an Arab-American in a post-9/11 global climate. He explores these questions through the firsthand accounts of seven young Arab-Americans living in Brooklyn.

CUNY Graduate Center, 365 Fifth Ave

212-817-1880 • [tinyurl.com/4vvp4g](http://tinyurl.com/4vvp4g)

#### THU OCT 9

7pm • FREE

DISCUSSION: FREE TRADE AND THE THREAT OF GLOBAL WARMING. Come hear global warming expert Anthony Marr talk about how the global warming crisis is worse than we've been told. Adam Weissman of Global Justice for Animals and the Environment will also discuss the link between corporate globalization and global climate change.

123 Community Space, 123 Tompkins Ave (at Myrtle Ave), Bklyn

123communityspace.org

#### FRI OCT 10

7:30pm • Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$5

PANEL DISCUSSION: PROGRESSIVE RESPONSE TO FINANCIAL CRISIS. Join Naomi Klein, William Greider, Frances Fox Piven and *The Indy*'s Arun Gupta for a discussion about what people can do.

The Brecht Forum, 451 West St

212-242-4201 • [brechtforum.org](http://brechtforum.org)

#### SAT OCT 11

4pm • FREE

FILM: FINALLY GOT THE NEWS. Experience a powerful documentary about the activities of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers inside and outside Detroit's auto factories. Beginning with slavery through the growth and

organization of the working class, the film focuses on the crucial role played by black workers in the American economy.

Exit Art, 475 Tenth Ave (at 36th St)

212-966-7745 • [info@exitart.org](mailto:info@exitart.org)

#### SUN OCT 12

6pm-10pm • FREE

DISCUSSION: THE THEOLOGY OF IMMIGRATION: GOD, IMMIGRANTS AND ACTIVISM. Join Radical Living, Justice for Our Neighbors, the New Sanctuary Movement and John Wesley United Methodist Church for a gathering of clergy, layperson, immigrant and native-born people sharing with one another their beliefs and discovering what the Bible really has to say about immigration.

John Wesley United Methodist Church

260 Quincy St, Bklyn • 212-444-2701

[radicallivingnyc.com](http://radicallivingnyc.com)

#### WED OCT 15

7:30pm • Sliding scale \$6/\$10/\$15

CALENDAR LAUNCH: THE PATH OF MOST RESISTANCE: A U.S. RADICAL HISTORY TOUR. Celebrate the publication of the new edition of the War Resisters League's best-selling peace calendar, edited by author Judith Mahoney Pasternak, who is a film and theater critic for *The Indy*.

The Brecht Forum, 451 West St

212-242-4201 • [brechtforum.org](http://brechtforum.org)

#### FRI OCT 17

4pm-6pm • FREE

EVENT: BOY/GIRL OR NONE/BOTH OF THE ABOVE: TRANSGENDERED IN THE 21st CENTURY. Celebrate and discuss the joys, freedoms and predicaments that come along with self-identifying and being either, all or neither when it comes to gender. Are masculinity, femininity and the gender binary now obsolete?

Reception to follow discussion.

The Library, 2nd Fl

Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimo

24 W 12th St (btwn Fifth and Sixth Aves)

212-998-8730 • [dnl215@nyu.edu](mailto:dnl215@nyu.edu)

#### SAT OCT 18

7pm • \$7 Suggested donation

FILM: REZONING HARLEM captures longtime Harlem residents and their struggle to fight a 2008 rezoning measure that threatens to replace the rich cultural tapestry of the neighborhood with luxury housing, office space and big-box retail.

Maysles Cinema,

343 Lenox Ave/Malcolm X Blvd

(btwn 127th and 128th Sts)

212-582-6050 • [cinema@mayslesfilms.com](mailto:cinema@mayslesfilms.com)

#### SAT OCT 19

10:15am-1pm • \$15

WALKING TOUR: FIND WILD FOOD IN PROSPECT PARK. Join locavore and botanist Leda Meredith for a guided tour of Brooklyn's urban forest. Autumn's cooler

weather means that there will be looking for wild greens, nuts, root vegetables, the last of the summer fruits. At the end of the walk, sit in the park and eat wild edible treats!

Meet at the Grand Army Plaza entrance (near the Gazebo), Prospect Park, Bklyn.

[greenedgenyc.org](http://greenedgenyc.org) • RSVP Joanna and

bring cash: [joanna@greenedgenyc.org](mailto:joanna@greenedgenyc.org)

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# A Green Outpost Grows in Brooklyn

BY RICHARD SOLASH

Jared Castillo is pedaling hard, but he isn't going anywhere. On this bike, that's the point. The potential energy stored in the muscles of his eight-year-old legs is converted to kinetic energy, sending the blades of a blender spinning. In a few seconds, Jared has made an electricity-free fruit smoothie, literally all by himself.

The bike blender — a cyclist's version of a Cuisinart — has become a de facto logo of the Habana Outpost, the Fort Greene curiosity that is part Cuban restaurant, part nonprofit educational effort. The Outpost provides more than just fun and games. On Sept. 1, the final day before public schools opened across the city, the organization held its Back to School Bash. In its inaugural year, the event is just one example of the company's newly energized effort to boost the environmental awareness of area students — and offer the green education that they may not be receiving in the classroom.

"This is a unique site in New York City," said Kate Zidar, who recently became the first full-time director of Habana Works, the Outpost's expanding nonprofit branch. "There have been a lot of pilot projects and research and advocacy, but the one really special thing at Habana is that we have the capacity to actually build."

The "building" that Zidar speaks of is both physical and civic: owner Sean Meenan gives eco-conscious employees free rein to use the restaurant as a workshop for conservation ideas — the solar-powered cell phone charger in the courtyard, the rainwater collection unit on the roof — while free, family-oriented activities encourage community bonding. But now, under Zidar's leadership, Habana Works is debuting new partnerships, a teacher forum and green opportunities for teens.

The Back to School Bash marked the first time that Habana Works had teamed up with the Brooklyn Public Library. Zidar also plans to institute collaborations with the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the Brooklyn Children's Museum and other organizations to enhance the impact of Habana Works programming on children.

"It's important for everyone to learn about environmentalism, but especially children," said Zidar, standing in the herb-filled Kid's Corner. "Before you have folks who are set in their ways, you have the opportunity to take it a step further. Also, when they're young, they can learn really easily and then take a lot of the knowledge home as well, so they wind up educating their elders."

Nearby, the former Master Composter at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden grabbed handfuls of moistened newspaper. Micki Josi, math teacher and co-



**POWERFUL LEGS:** Eight-year-old Jared Castillo blends his own fruit smoothie with a bicycle blender at Habana Outpost, an environmentally friendly Cuban restaurant in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, as Manager Xiomara Morgan keeps a close eye. The Sept. 1 Back to School Bash was the first of many events that the restaurant and its nonprofit wing have in the works for students and teachers to help raise local environmental awareness.

PHOTO: RICHARD SOLASH

founder of the New York City School Recycling Action Committee, returned to her dirt-loving ways at the Back to School Bash. She spent her day teaching middle schoolers how to make their own mini-worm-bins — small enough to fit under a sink, and effective in bringing composting into even the most cramped of city apartments.

"If eco-education is done ad hoc in schools, it won't work," said Josi. "If the Department of Education is actively pushing technology education, why can't they do the same for recycling? Without the educational background, it doesn't make sense for kids to recycle."

Josi, who spent the previous day helping to convert plastic yogurt containers into cutlery, teaches at Middle School 447 in Boerum Hill, which offers a specialized environment-conscious curriculum. She chose to volunteer at the Labor Day event for the children and says she will continue to do so "until there are paid recycling coordinators in each school."

Until then, Habana Works will be working to fill the gap. "Habana Academy," a new weekly program that will run from October to December, will bring local teachers together for an information-sharing cocktail hour. There, they can discuss strategies for bringing environmentalism into the classroom and learn from guest speakers. They will also be introduced to the Habana facility

itself, a potential class trip destination.

Habana is betting that teenagers will appreciate green opportunities too. "Working on an environmental project over the summer is definitely better than working at McDonald's or getting into trouble," says Zidar, who is arranging the new Break It Down internship program. With it, Habana is targeting a new age group, complementing its diverse offerings for younger children and its two-year-old Urban Studio Brooklyn program, which provides eco-friendly building experience to architecture and design students.

Teens will have their chance when the school year ends, but on the day before it began, elementary school students were the focus at Habana. Fort Greene mom Zakia Williams was one of the many who brought her children to the free event. Her two daughters, who attend nearby P.S. 20, spent most of the afternoon swarming around the bee-keeping table.

"They're afraid of the bees, but they are very curious and asking me a lot of questions," said Williams, setting her roasted corn on a biodegradable plate. "This is their first green experience, and I think we'll be back."

*The solar-powered Habana Outpost is located at 757 Fulton Street (at South Portland Street), in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. 718-858-9500.*



## Wall Street Bailout May Hammer Tenants

BY BENNETT BAUMER

Wall Street's mortgage and credit crisis will have a huge price tag and tenant advocates fear one casualty could be a swath of New York's affordable housing stock. Call it Wall Street stabilization over rent stabilization.

And the stakes are rising as private equity landlords across the city feverishly move to evict rent-stabilized tenants in favor of higher paying renters to pay staggering mortgages. If these landlords default, tens of thousands of apartments could be in danger.

Tenant lawyers specifically point to *Resolution Trust Corporation v. Diamond*, a case from the early 1990s that allowed the government-run Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC) to resell defaulted mortgages at a higher rate by overriding tenants' rent-stabilization protections in foreclosed buildings. Created in 1989 as a response to the savings and loan crisis that saw hundreds of thrifts go under due to reckless lending, the RTC bought up \$394 billion of bad assets (mostly commercial leases) and resold them to the private sector before dissolving in 1995.

Now, as Congress moves to clean up after Wall Street's binge, business interests are already calling for the creation of an entity modeled on the RTC to soak up investors' bad assets.

"If [Congress] follows the resolution trust model, I believe the [trust] will be able to evict tenants," says Bob Katz, an attorney at the tenant law firm Collins, Dobkin and Miller. "*RTC v. Diamond* allows federal preemption; so where the federal government expressly enacts law, it takes precedence over state law."

More than 2,200 New York City homeowners — in largely African-American and Latino neighborhoods — have already defaulted on their mortgages this year, according to real estate research website propertyshark.com. Yet, an even greater default crisis is lurking in New York City. Highly leveraged corporate landlords that have bought up tens of thousands of rent-stabilized apartments could be the next victims of the housing crisis, leaving tenants in the lurch.

"*RTC v. Diamond* makes really clear that the federal court doesn't feel rent stabilization extends protections," says Jeffrey Brooks, a staff attorney at Gay Men's Health Crisis, an AIDS advocacy group that represents HIV-positive tenants. "Our clients were forgotten once before, we don't want them forgotten again."

The Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development estimates that private equity finance groups have bought approximately 90,000 rent-regulated apartments across the city in the past four years, according to the *The Villager*. Many private equity firms' ability to pay their gargantuan mortgages is predicated on substantially increasing rents by evicting rent-stabilized tenants and replacing them with market renters.

In one case, the landlord of the 1,232-unit Riverton Houses, a seven building complex between Fifth Avenue and the Harlem River and 135th and 138th Streets in Harlem, could default on his \$225 million mortgage as early as the end of October, according to the *New York Times*. The landlord, Larry Gluck, purchased the building with backing from the private equity firm, the Rockpoint Group. Almost 90 percent of Riverton tenants are rent-regulated and protected from eviction as long as they pay their rent on time and the apartment is their primary residence. These tenants could face an uneasy future if Gluck defaults and *RTC v. Diamond* comes into play.

The scale of this decade's bailout could be more than \$1 trillion, and if private equity held buildings begin to default, it could send shock waves through the city's affordable housing market.

"If the government follows the trust model, it would be attractive to the Bush administration to do away with rent regulations," tenant attorney Katz says.

# CUNY Rising

## COLLEGE ACTIVISTS MOBILIZE CAMPUS-WIDE 3-DAY SOCIAL FORUM

BY CHRIS CASCARANO  
AND JOHN TARLETON

**B**attered by budget cuts and burdened by some tuition costs while facing an indifferent administration, students at the City University of New York (CUNY) will hold a three-day gathering to chart a course for reviving campus activism.

The CUNY Social Forum will be held at the City College campus in Harlem Oct. 17 to 19. The goal is to bring together students, adjuncts and faculty from across CUNY's 23 campuses to share their experiences and strategize around a host of important issues including tuition hikes, the university's increasing reliance on low-wage adjuncts, restoring open admissions and defending ethnic and gender studies programs. Organizers also envision CUNY as a place where student, faculty and the community have meaningful decision-making power.

"By seeing CUNY as an integral part of the city, and not just a place to do time before we can get a real job, I think we start to see the bigger picture," forum organizer Terri Bennett wrote in an email to *The Independent*. "Just like our neighborhoods are becoming unaffordable, as people of color,

the working class, and poor people are being displaced by real estate developers ... CUNY is becoming less and less accessible to those same people. Just like New York needs a movement for affordable housing, we need a movement for an accessible CUNY."

The CUNY Social Forum is modeled on global, national and regional social forums that have been held around the world during the past seven years. The social forum model allows participants from various social movements to come together and share their experiences and organically build alliances, rather than unite around a single charismatic leader or ideology.

Founded in 1848 as a free academy for the children of immigrant and working class New Yorkers, CUNY has a rich history of radical student activism dating back to the socialist movements of the early 20th century. In 1969, a two-week student-led takeover of the City College campus forced CUNY's administration to adopt an open admissions policy that greatly expanded opportunities for Black and Latino students. In 1989 and 1995, thousands of CUNY students took to the streets to protest proposed tuition increases.

Despite these efforts, tuition and fees at

CUNY rose 94 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars from 1989 to 2006, while the state's contribution fell by 35 percent and the city's by 24 percent, according to the New York City Independent Budget Office. The Budget Office also reported that tuition payments as a percentage of CUNY's \$1.7 billion annual budget jumped from 19.9 percent in 1990 to 42 percent in 2006.

Today, CUNY students face an uncertain future as the city and the state confront budget shortfalls due to the economic downturn. In August, the legislature cut state funding for CUNY by \$51 million (or, 7 percent) at the behest of Gov. David Paterson, even as the governor forecast more budget cuts in coming years.

"Right now, the problems are not just in schools, but society as well," said Mark Torres, one of several former CUNY students who participated in the 1989 protests who is helping organize the Social Forum. "Now is a time for change, and I have faith in this school."

CUNY is the largest urban university system in the country. It is comprised of 23 institutions including 11 four-year colleges and six community colleges. More than 400,000

undergraduates, graduates, adult, continuing and professional education students are enrolled in the university system. Because it is primarily a commuter school and half the student body works while taking classes, it's difficult for the students to exert pressure on the university's Board of Trustees, who are appointed by the governor and the mayor.

"We are pretty alienated here," said Olivia Katz, a graduate student who is one of the founding members of the Social Forum. "We never knew what was going on at different campuses, or where our money was going."

Katz and friends began meeting to discuss what was going on between campuses and what they would like to know. Before long, the group became larger and they took on the Social Forum name.

"Once it started, everyone had an issue," said Katz. "People had problems with tuition, privatization, the increasing number of adjunct faculty who have to teach to pay tuition — tons of things."

For more information see [cunysocialforum.com](http://cunysocialforum.com).

## SQUEEZE PLAY

CUNY tuition has increased steadily over the past three decades, while state and city support for public higher education has declined.

*Source: Office of the CUNY Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance*

	ANNUAL TUITION FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES	ANNUAL TUITION COMMUNITY COLLEGES
1848-1975	Free	Free
1976	\$925	\$775
1983	\$1,225	\$1,225
1991	\$1,350	\$1,350
1992	\$1,850	\$1,750
1993	\$2,450	\$2,100
1996	\$3,200	\$2,500
2003	\$4,000	\$2,800
2008	\$4,000	\$2,800

### By the Numbers

**94** Percentage increase in tuition and fees in inflation-adjusted dollars from 1989 to 2006.

**35** Percentage decrease in state funding for CUNY in inflation-adjusted dollars from 1989 to 2006.

**24** Percentage decrease in city funding for CUNY in inflation-adjusted dollars from 1989 to 2006.

**19.9** Percentage of CUNY's budget derived from tuition payments in 1989.

**42** Percentage of CUNY's budget derived from tuition payments in 2006.

*Source: New York City Independent Budget Office*

### CUNY CHANCELLOR'S SALARY: THEN & NOW

Note: The CUNY chancellor's pay package includes a \$90,000-per-year housing allowance, plus free use of a car and driver.

*Source: CUNY Disorientation Guide*

1957	\$25,000
1990	\$140,000
1994	\$158,000
1999	\$250,000
2003	\$350,000
2006	\$395,000



**CROSS-CAMPUS UNITY.** More than 75 students, faculty and staff from the City University of New York (CUNY) rallied outside the CUNY Graduate Center in Midtown Sept. 22 to protest recent cuts in state funding for the university. PHOTO: JAMIE LEHANE

# *The Nation* presents A PROGRESSIVE RESPONSE TO THE WALL STREET CRISIS

A discussion with Naomi Klein, William Greider, Frances Fox Piven, Arun Gupta and others on how we should respond to the largest government bailout of Wall Street in the history of the nation.

**Friday, October 10**  
**7pm – 9 pm**

THE BRECHT FORUM  
451 West Street  
212-242-4201  
brechtforum.org

Naomi Klein is a best-selling author of *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* and *No Logo*.

William Greider is a prominent political journalist and author of *One World, Ready or Not*, *Secrets of the Temple* and *Who Will Tell The People*.

Frances Fox Piven is a CUNY professor and co-author of *Regulating the Poor*, *The Breaking of the American Social Compact* and *Why Americans Still Don't Vote*.

Arun Gupta is a long-time journalist and an editor of *The Indypendent*, New York City's leading independent newspaper.



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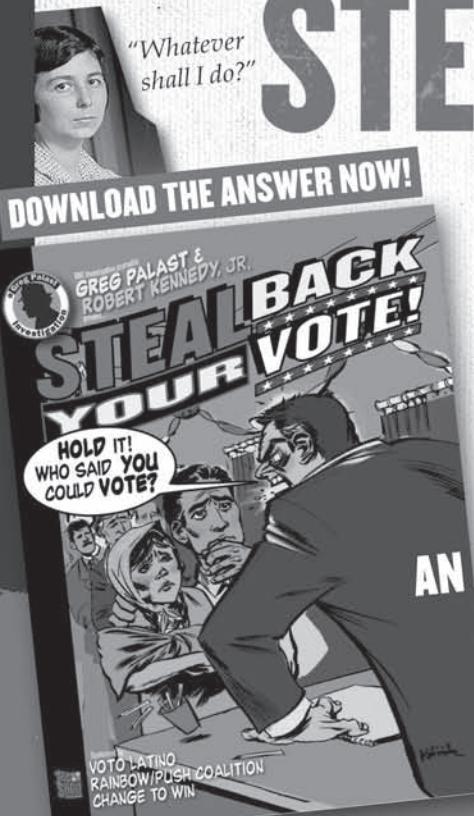
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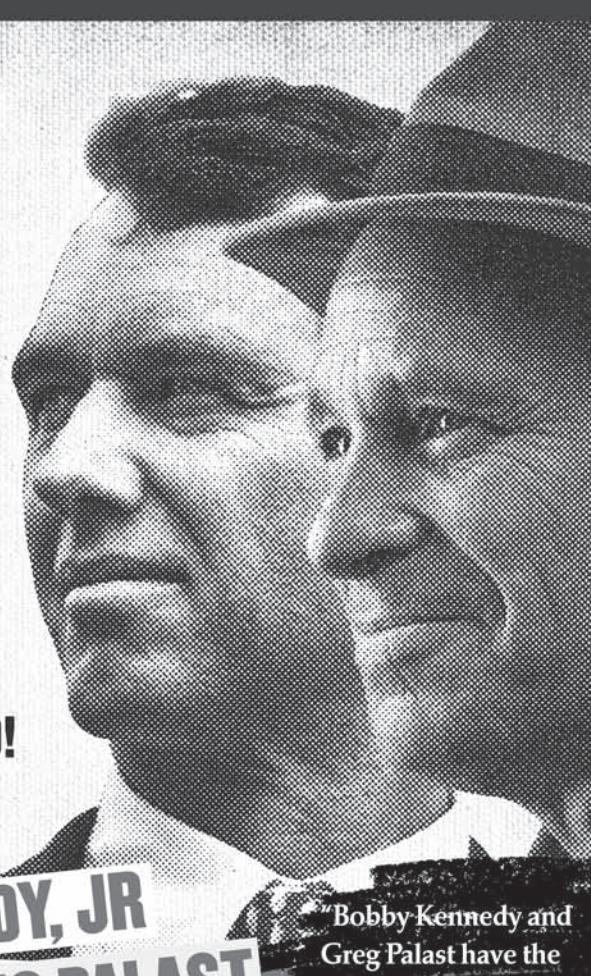


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"Bobby Kennedy and Greg Palast have the comic book that will Steal Back Your Vote!" —Jim Hightower

# The Illusion of Post-Racial America

## AN OBAMA VICTORY WOULD BE A MILESTONE, BUT COULD STALL STRUGGLES AGAINST RACISM

BY AMAN GILL

**F**orty-one years ago, racial tensions — festering since slave times — burst into the Long Hot Summer in the tri-state area. Thirty-four died in Newark, but the most dramatic upheaval came from Plainfield, N.J., a quiet suburb 30 miles from New York City. Amid minor but widespread skirmishes spreading across the region, a lone police officer beat and shot a black youth in the boy's neighborhood. The boy survived, but the cop, quickly surrounded by enraged community members, did not make it out of the neighborhood alive.

Ashanti Alston, a political prisoner activist with the Jericho Movement and former Black Panther who was a teenager in Plainfield at the time, traced the escalating plot for *The Indypendent*. "The thing about Plainfield that stood out from all the other rebellions was that folks made their way to a gun manufacturing place right outside of the city," Alston says. "They came back

Obama Campaign, Austin, Texas.

FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/AN\_AGENT/400339277/

of battles instead turned out to be the denouement. Things died down.

It's increasingly popular to argue that the fuel for unrest has disappeared because the problem of racism has receded into America's past. This idea has long held sway on the right, but, paradoxically, it's taken Barack Obama's candidacy to elevate this persistent right-wing myth into conventional wisdom.

### CIVIL RIGHTS UNFULFILLED

"The history he [Obama] needs to know is the history he rejects," says Lenore Daniels, editorial board member of the *Black Commentator*, a weekly online magazine. "He rejects the whole Black Power movement: 'Just the civil rights were fine, we'll leave it at that, there was progress.' [But] the Black Power movement is still relevant. That was a movement talking about economic equality, where King left off."

Histories of struggles are written by the victors. The movements of 40 years ago had winners and losers and, like any war, are

left their baggage behind. It was unsparing market capitalism for the rest of the community.

The result, as Columbia University historian Manning Marable puts it, is that "Jim Crow no longer existed, but in its place stood a far more formidable system of racial domination, rooted within the political economy and employing a language of fairness and equality." Racism in America may not look like all-white police forces, dogs on black men or sound like speeches by white supremacist politicians. It's more like a termite-infested house — political correctness and black representation in business, media and politics compose a nice-looking picture on the outside. But gashes in the façade expose structural disparities as racially aligned as ever. Statistical measures on rates of poverty, housing, employment and income are not far removed from their 1960s levels.

### BLACK AND WHITE

At times, Obama sounds more like Richard

United States. Indeed, the election of a black president would be an undeniable milestone in American history, forcing many white Americans to confront latent fears and distrust of black people. And many see progress in the fact that a black man can run a campaign in which race is incidental. Yet it's taken Obama's embrace of post-racialism, and concurrent distancing from traditional civil rights-style black leadership, to lend viability to his campaign. Some activists see him as the culmination of a trend over the last 40 years of black leaders moving away from the communities they've traditionally served and closer to the political and corporate power that dominates the Democratic Party.

### MOVEMENT POLITICS VS. ELECTORAL POLITICS

Alston feels that since the 1970s, the face of mainstream black activism has moved from a base in communities to big money and corporate sway. "No longer do you have the real radical movement folks that were coming out of grassroots movements," Alston says. "You have people tied to money, or tied to established political power. What I look at today is that the Sharptons, the Barack Obamas, the Jesse Jacksons and even a lot of these mega-preachers now are not leaders from the grassroots. They're system leaders that were chosen by either political forces or corporate forces."

After attending Columbia University, Obama put in three years as a community organizer working on a range of neighborhood issues in the largely black Southside of Chicago. But his trajectory afterward — Harvard Law School and a stint as a law professor at the University of Chicago — looks more like the record of black politicians rising up in municipal politics in the 1980s and 1990s than the résumé of earlier leaders like King, Stokely Carmichael or Angela Davis. As he entered politics, he increasingly relied on allies culled from the Chicago elite — after the 2000 Census, he had his state senate district redrawn to make it, according to Ryan Lizza of *The New Yorker*, "wealthier, white, more Jewish, less-blue collar and better educated." The connections he cultivated with his new well-to-do constituents were vital to his successful 2004 campaign for a U.S. Senate seat.

As Democratic dominance of national-level black politics accelerated, communities' sense of action eroded into the passive live-with-your-fate mode that presently defines U.S. democracy. "When we go back to the 1950s and 1960s," Alston says, "that was the period when people were not relying on the Democratic Party, the party that black folks are so tied to [today]. People were in the streets, people voted through their civil disobedience and direct action and organizing."

The key question is whether much of the agenda in the fight against racial inequality remains unfulfilled. If so, there's plenty to drive modern-day movements, taking outrages like the Sean Bell verdict to illuminate the living economic inequality untouched by 1960s activism. If not, then what happened to Sean Bell is just an aberration that could have happened to anyone, of any class and any race, in a country that has finally fulfilled its egalitarian ideals. That may be an America to hope for, but it's not the one we have today.



to the community with rifles and it was a whole different ball game. It wasn't until the National Guard came that they were able to retake the black community."

Today, decades later, why does racial conflict no longer generate the same kind of heat? Not for lack of ignition. In Queens in November 2006, an undercover vice operation turned into an execution. A 50-shot cop fusillade killed Sean Bell, a young black man heading home on his final night as an unmarried man, and injured two of his friends, all unarmed. The murder won state sanction in April 2008, when a New York State Supreme Court judge accepted at face value the officers' contention that they feared for their lives, making their killing fully legal.

The verdict generated both outrage and despair. Hundreds of people marched that afternoon and "Justice for Sean Bell" signs sprang up throughout the boroughs. But an Al Sharpton-led civil disobedience action in June that might have been the first in a line

remembered more ideologically than objectively. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended Jim Crow and for the first time in U.S. history granted black people formal equality before the law, but failed to transform their lives day-to-day. After 1965, all wings of the movement turned to address this gap: King turned from law and morality to economics; Malcolm X's militancy spread despite his assassination, Black Power was born, and the movement moved north.

Obama's view of a united, post-racial America is in the tradition of how the political establishment — Democrat and Republican — responded to heightened militancy. There was forceful repression, but also a more subtle, ideological response. The language of Jim Crow segregationism gave way to political correctness and new coded terms like "war on drugs." Those who were never allies of the oppressed lauded King and proclaimed the end of discrimination. And black elites, once viewed with suspicion, were welcomed to the table as long as they

Nixon than someone concerned with racism. At the 1968 Republican National Convention Nixon proclaimed, "To those who say law and order is the code word for racism, here is a reply: Our goal is justice for every American." Obama's response to the persecution of the Jena 6 nearly 40 years later sounded a similar note: "Outrage over an injustice like the Jena 6 isn't a matter of black and white. It's a matter of right and wrong."

Obama did not dwell on the marks of racism, so clear to many of us, in the demography of disaster left by Hurricane Katrina. "I do not subscribe to the notion that the painfully slow response of FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security was racially based," he said. "The ineptitude was color-blind." And Obama did not object to the Sean Bell ruling, saying, "The judge has made his ruling, and we're a nation of laws, so we respect the verdict that came down."

Obama's candidacy is seen as an indication that racial barriers no longer exist in the



BY ALEX KANE

**A** month after Republican vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin trashed community organizers as a way to attack Barack Obama, activists and individuals around the country have responded by raising more than \$7,500 for the "Community Organizers Fight Back Fund." The Chicago-based Midwest Academy is managing the fund and will use the money to train future organizers.

During her acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention Sept. 3, Palin remarked that being the mayor of Wasilla, Alaska, was "sort of like a community organizer, except that you have actual responsibilities." Former New York Governor George Pataki chimed in as well, saying, "What in God's name is a community organizer? I

## THANK YOU, SARAH PALIN!

### TRASH-TALKING ALASKA GOVERNOR INSPIRES COMMUNITY ORGANIZER ACTION FUND

don't even know if that's a job."

As one prominent Republican after another mocked Obama's three years of working with low-income residents on the South Side of Chicago in the 1980s, irate community organizers rapidly mobilized.

"These were pretty personal attacks. That's the work I do every day," recalls John Raskin, a 27-year-old community organizer with Housing Conservation Coordinators, a group that works for affordable housing on the West Side of Manhattan. Community organizers work together with individuals and families to take local collective action and win improvements on issues facing their neighborhoods.

Raskin immediately contacted other organizers and formed the Community Organizers of America (COA). A website was quickly put up, [organizersfightback.wordpress.com](http://organizersfightback.wordpress.com), and hundreds of comments poured in expressing solidarity with community organizers of all stripes.

Five days after COA was formed, a call for donations to the ironically named "Sarah Palin Action Fund for Organizer Training" was made. COA's efforts raised \$2,600, which has been donated to the Midwest Academy's general fund to train community organizers.

The Midwest Academy bills itself as a "national training institute committed to advancing the struggle for social, economic

and racial justice."

Jackie Kendall, the executive director of the academy, says that the money will most likely be used for a combination of subsidizing people going to its training programs and providing some of the stipend money for up to 40 participants in summer internship programs.

Activists attending the training will learn about a variety of organizing skills from working with coalitions to successful recruiting tactics to strategies to hold elected officials accountable.

Rae Wright, an organizer with Citizen Action Illinois, a public interest organization, attended Midwest Academy's internship program in 2007. "It taught me not only how to be a stronger organizer, but to be a stronger peer and leader in the communities that I am invested in," she says.

The next training session will be from Oct. 6 to 10 in Chicago, with costs per participant ranging from \$775 to \$1,050.

According to the academy, individuals on the email list of True Majority, a liberal organization founded by Ben Cohen of Ben and Jerry's Homemade Ice Cream, contributed the most money for the fund after a plea for donations was announced to their listserv.

The McCain-Palin campaign has tried to downplay the mocking of community organizers, saying that they play an "important role." Peter Feldman, a spokesman for the campaign, wrote in an email to *The Indy*-

pendent Sept. 18: "Gov. Palin's remark was in response to the Obama campaign's belittling of her executive experience. There is certainly a place as demonstrated by Gov. Palin's own record of civic involvement, but Barack Obama's role as a community organizer pales in comparison to Gov. Palin's demonstrated experience."

Jackie del Valle, the lead housing organizer for New Settlement Apartments, a Bronx-based housing advocacy group, and a member of COA, says that "it was clear that [the Republicans] didn't have an understanding at all of what community organizers were."

Around 18,000 members of Facebook, the social networking website, have joined groups with names like "Community Organizers Against Sarah Palin" and "We Are All Community Organizers" speaking out against the GOP's attacks on organizers.

"We have to hold the officials who use this sort of language accountable," Raskin says. "[We need] to make sure that when you attack community organizers, you can't get away with that."

COA plans on sending a "thank-you" letter to Palin after its \$10,000 fundraising drive is over, commanding her for "raising awareness of the vital role of community organizing."

*For more information on the fund drive, visit [midwestacademy.com](http://midwestacademy.com) and [organizersfightback.wordpress.com](http://organizersfightback.wordpress.com).*

**The Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign was formed on November 2000 with the aim of fighting evictions, water cut-offs and poor health services, obtaining free electricity, securing decent housing and opposing police brutality.**

### ANTI - EVICTION CAMPAIGN

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# Hispanic Panic

## GOP STOKES FEARS OF 'ILLEGAL' VOTERS

**VOTER SHUTOUT:** 97-year-old Shirley Preiss has voted in every election since 1932, but cannot register to vote in Arizona because she lacks proof of her citizenship. She was born in Kentucky before the state issued birth certificates and says she's never left the country, so she does not have a passport. Arizona is one of eight states that require voters to prove U.S. citizenship. PHOTO: STOKELY BAKSH

BY RENEE FELTZ

### 21st Century Voter Disenfranchisement: BY THE NUMBERS

BY JOHN TARLETON

While claiming to target immigrants who vote illegally, right-wing efforts to require proof of citizenship for voting could disenfranchise millions of U.S. citizens — primarily low-income, African-American, elderly, female and college-age voters.

**7:** Percentage of voting-age Americans who lack ready access to citizenship documents (at least 13 million people).

**12:** Percentage of voting-age citizens with incomes less than \$25,000 per year who lack ready access to citizenship documents.

**66:** Percentage of voting-age women with proof of citizenship who have a document with current legal name. At least 32 million women may have proof of citizenship documents that do not reflect their current name.

**11:** Percentage of voting-age U.S. citizens who lack valid, government-issued photo ID.

**18:** Percentage of elderly U.S. citizens who lack a valid, government-issued photo ID.

**25:** Percentage of voting-age African-Americans who do not have a valid, government-issue photo ID.

**8:** Percentage of voting-age whites who do not have valid, government-issued photo ID.

**15:** Percentage of voting-age U.S. citizens earning less than \$35,000 per year who do not have valid, government-issued photo ID.

**10:** Percentage of voting-age citizens whose photo ID does not have their current address and legal name.

**18:** Percentage of voting-age citizens age 18 to 24 who do not have photo ID with current address and name.

Source: Brennan Center for Justice, brennancenter.org

PHOENIX—While both presidential candidates avoid discussing immigration reform, Republican pundits are stirring up concern about non-citizens throwing the election.

"The evidence is indisputable that aliens, both legal and illegal, are registering and voting in federal, state, and local elections," wrote Hans A. von Spakovsky in June in a widely circulated "legal memorandum" entitled "The Threat of Non-Citizen Voting."

Von Spakovsky is a former Bush recess appointee to the U.S. Department of Justice, where as counsel to the assistant attorney general for civil rights, he specialized in voting and election issues. After the Senate blocked his reappointment citing his involvement in "efforts to politicize the Department and use the Voting Rights Section to disenfranchise voters, rather than enforce our nation's civil rights laws," he served as a member of the Federal Election Commission for two years.

Now with the Heritage Foundation, a leading right-wing think tank, von Spakovsky argues the "honor system" of signing a legally binding registration card fails to keep non-citizens from the polls, and suggests election officials should be allowed to access U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement databases "regarding voter eligibility based on citizenship." He also wants all states to require anyone who registers to vote to provide proof of U.S. citizenship.

Citizenship is already a legal requirement to vote in the United States, but GOP scare tactics have led more than a dozen states to consider additional legislation to require documented proof of citizenship, and in many cases a Voter ID card, in order to vote.

Voter registration rates in Arizona, the one state with both types of laws, suggest these cumbersome requirements will further disenfranchise low-income citizens, people of color and the elderly, all of whom are more likely to vote Democratic.

**SCAPEGOATING IMMIGRANTS**  
Republicans first used outcry about undocumented immigration in the border state of Arizona to win support for a citizen initiative four years ago that requires voter registration applicants to document their citizenship with a birth certificate, a passport or naturalization papers.

"You had a confluence of two interests," said Linda Brown, director of the Arizona Advocacy Network, when asked how backers of the initiative known as Proposition 200 overcame opposition from most of the public and the state's elected officials in 2004.

The first force at work was the anti-illegal immigration movement. "These are the true believers," Brown said. "Even though there is no documentation people are voting illegally, certainly not on purpose," they will favor a crackdown on such behavior, she explained.

"Then you had the other group, the savvy political operatives," Brown said. "They believe it is reasonable to deny law-abiding citizens the right to vote by shaving the rolls of people least likely to vote the way they want them to."

When Proposition 200 passed there had been just 33 cases of documented voter fraud throughout the country between October 2002 and September 2005. Ten of the cases were acquitted or dismissed, and 19 of the 23 people prosecuted had registered to vote and voted using their real names — not the best method for getting away with fraud.

In fact, voting rights advocates say individuals trying to steal or cast an invalid ballot is less likely than being struck by lightning. The practice is even more rare among non-citizens.

"If you're a non-citizen and you register or vote, there is a paper trail that connects you to that voting," notes Justin Levitt, counsel to the nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice at New York University. "If you're convicted, which is a straightforward thing, you can be fined up to \$10,000 and, probably most serious, you can be deported. For the majority of people, those odds just don't make sense."

### TURNING A RIGHT INTO A PRIVILEGE

According to the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, at least 38,000 voter registration applications have been rejected in Arizona since Proposition 200 went into effect in 2005, largely because of failure to document citizenship.

Outreach groups say that when they conduct registration drives voters often are not carrying their birth certificate, passport or naturalization papers.

"I was trained to do this job back in Detroit and it was so easy to get people registered because all I needed was people's name, address and the last four digits of their Social Security number and their signature," said Teresa Castro, political director for Arizona's ACORN chapter, a group that has been working to register low-income voters. "But here in Arizona it got more complicated because you have to ask people to give up all this information to us."

According to a phone survey commissioned by the Brennan Center in 2006, 7 percent of Americans lack ready access to proof of their citizenship.

"After Proposition 200, I feel like something that is a right is treated more like a privilege you have to earn," said Teresa Castro, political director for ACORN in Arizona.

Access to documents like birth certificates and passports can be especially costly and difficult for low-income and elderly voters, like 97-year-old Shirley Preiss, who moved to Arizona in 2007 to be with her son, Joe Nemnich.

"My mom was born August 17 in 1910, in Clinton, Kentucky. There was no birth certificate," Nemnich said. "Can I get a delayed birth certificate? No, I can't ... everyone she knows is dead."

Preiss cast a ballot for Franklin Roosevelt in 1932 and has voted in every election since. Her Social Security card and several state-issued ID cards are of no use. She says Prop 200 violates her constitutional rights. "I have a legal right," Preiss said. "It says so right in the book."

### THE ARIZONA MODEL GOES NATIONAL

Republicans say the problems faced by voters such as Preiss are a small price to pay.

"Every vote cast by a non-citizen, whether an illegal alien or a resident alien legally in the country, dilutes or cancels the vote of a citizen and thus disenfranchises him or her," said von Spakovsky in his Heritage Foundation memorandum.

While Arizona's law is unique, that could soon change. The chair of Arizona's Republican Party, Randy Pullen, said he has advised supporters of similar laws in Georgia, Oklahoma and Colorado.

"It's almost like we're incubators in terms of what works and what doesn't work on this issue. I've been very pleased with how this worked out nationally," Pullen said. "And I expect ... this will become pretty much the standard for most states." Which states? "Red states," he said.

Bills to require voters to show documented proof of citizenship narrowly failed this year in a handful of states where the GOP controls the legislature, such as Missouri and Kansas.

Virginia enacted a law that allows the registrar to remove "all persons known by him not to be United States citizens" from voter rolls after sending them a notice requesting sworn statement of citizenship that requires a reply within 14 days or the application or registration will be cancelled.

Supporters of Indiana's Voter ID law cited voter fraud by undocumented immigrants as a reason for the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold the measure, which it did.

Eight states already require or request photo ID at the polls — Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Hawaii, Louisiana, Michigan and South Dakota; Kansas and Pennsylvania require photo ID for first-time voters. Meanwhile, anticipation of voter fraud has become so ingrained that recent news articles have encouraged voters in all states to bring photo ID with them to the polls "just in case."

As Bush-appointee von Spakovsky argues, doing "anything less encourages contempt for the law and our election process."

# WAIL STREET

**H**and over the money. Or else." That was the message, in so many words, that Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson delivered to Americans after the financial markets went into a free-fall in mid-September. Paulson's demand for a \$700 billion bailout of Wall Street had all the subtlety of a convenience store stick-up, and the two major presidential candidates quickly acquiesced.

"This is something that all of us will swallow hard and go forward with," said John McCain. "The option of doing nothing is simply not an acceptable option."

"There will be time to punish those who set this fire, but now is the moment for us to come together and put the fire out," said Barack Obama.

After being told for decades that any government action in defense of the common good was wasteful and immoral, an angry, frightened public is being told by its leaders that a massive rescue of the super rich (but no one else) is essential to our survival. Instead of explaining how we really got into this mess (see page 10) or highlighting sensible alternatives (see page 13) to the Bush administration's plan to pay inflated prices for near-worthless securities, the media is also sounding the trumpet of national sacrifice.

As *The Indypendent* goes to press, it appears Congress will pass a new bailout bill festooned with tax cuts. But don't hold your breath waiting for the wealthiest nation in history to provide universal health care or universal higher education or to invest massively in rail and mass transit, wind and solar technologies and myriad other things that will make for a healthier and more sustainable society. The money is there. The piñata has been broken open. It's just a question of priorities and political will. If we're going to have socialism for Wall Street, how about a little bit for the rest of us?

—John Tarleton

## Shocking But Not Unexpected

In *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein traces 35 years of U.S. government and corporate complicity in everything from military coups, economic collapse, endless wars to the aftermath of natural disasters to advance a radical right-wing agenda that the public would never accept under normal circumstances. Under "disaster capitalism," calamities — both natural and man-made — are the ultimate business opportunity.

Klein's book was first published in September 2007. It has since gone on to be-

come a worldwide bestseller translated into 26 languages. Recent events certainly haven't disproven her thesis. In a Sept. 22 column on *HuffingtonPost.com* she noted, "I wrote *The Shock Doctrine* in the hopes that it would make us all better prepared for the next big shock. Well, that shock has certainly arrived, along with gloves-off attempts to use it to push through radical pro-corporate policies."

—J.T.

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

As Congress prepares to hand over \$700 billion to Wall Street, Joseph Keppler's famous 1889 cartoon, "The Bosses of the Senate," offers a glimpse into an earlier Gilded Age when powerful industrialists used

political influence and ruthless business practices to amass vast fortunes in an unregulated economy that saw frequent financial panics. For more, see Donald Paneth's article on *indypendent.org*.



PHOTO: CHRISTY THORNTON



### TURMOIL ON WALL STREET:

Protests against the \$700 billion bailout took place in scores of towns and cities Sept. 25. In New York City, approximately 1,500 labor unionists gathered for a lunchtime rally just south of Wall Street. Later that afternoon, about 400 people marched up Broadway from the Merrill Lynch bull to the corner of Wall and Broad Streets where they heckled traders exiting the New York Stock Exchange with chants like, "You Broke It, You Bought It!" and "You Fucked Up, Suck It Up!" Dozens of media outfits were on hand for the march on Wall Street and organizers vowed to continue demonstrating against the proposed bailout.

The protests were sparked by a call to action sent out three days earlier by Arun Gupta, an editor at *The Indypendent*. "This crime is without precedence and we can't be silent!" he wrote. "What's the point of waiting for someone else to organize a protest two months from now, long after the crime has been perpetrated?"

Composed as an email to friends, the message quickly went viral and spread like wildfire across the Internet, and liberal groups like True Majority and United for Peace and Justice also adopted Sep. 25 as a day of protest against the bailout.

"I'm a journalist, not an organizer," Gupta said afterward. "But we all live in the real world and have to act in it."

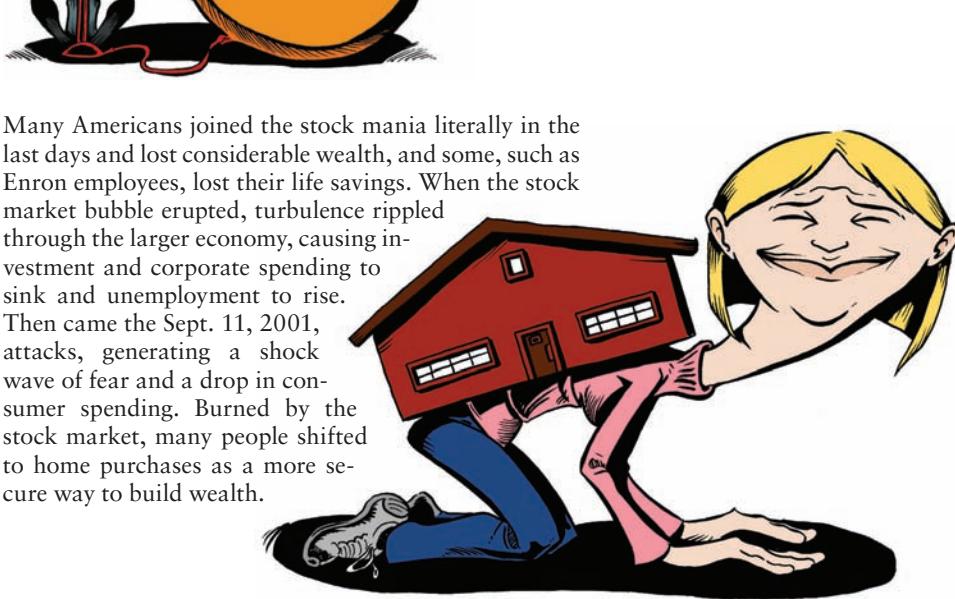
—J.T.

# How to Wreck the Economy

**E**verything you ever wanted to know  
about the biggest economic melt-  
down since the Great Depression  
but were afraid to ask.

From 1982 to 2000, the U.S. stock market went on the longest **bull run** ever, as share prices rose to dizzying heights. In the late 1990s, a combination of factors, which included the Federal Reserve lowering interest rates, created a huge price bubble in Internet stocks. A **speculative bubble** occurs when price far outstrips the fundamental worth of the asset. Bubbles have occurred in everything from real estate, stocks and railroads to tulips, beanie babies and comic books. As with all bubbles, it took more and more money to make a return\*. This led to the Internet bubble popping in March 2000.

\*For instance, if you purchased 100 shares of Apple at \$10 a share and it rose to \$20, it cost \$1,000 to make \$1,000 profit (a 100 percent return), but if the shares were \$100 each and rose to \$110, it would cost \$10,000 to make \$1,000 profit (a 10 percent return — and the loss potential would be much greater, too.



Many Americans joined the stock mania literally in the last days and lost considerable wealth, and some, such as Enron employees, lost their life savings. When the stock market bubble erupted, turbulence rippled through the larger economy, causing investment and corporate spending to sink and unemployment to rise. Then came the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, generating a shock wave of fear and a drop in consumer spending. Burned by the stock market, many people shifted to home purchases as a more secure way to build wealth.

By 2002, with the economy already limping along, former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and the Fed slashed interest rates to historic lows of near 1 percent to avoid a severe economic downturn. Low interest rates make borrowed money cheap for everyone from homebuyers to banks. This ocean of credit was one factor that led to a major shift in the home-lending industry — from **originate to own** to **originate to distribute**. Low interest rates also meant that homebuyers could take on larger mortgages, which supported rising prices.



In the originate-to-own model, the mortgage lender — which can be a private mortgage company, bank, thrift or credit union — holds the mortgage for its term, usually 30 years. Every month the bank\* **originating** the mortgage receives a payment made of principal and interest from the homeowner. If the buyer defaults on the mortgage, that is, stops making monthly payments, then the bank can seize and sell a valuable asset: the house. Given strict borrowing standards and the long life of the loan, it's like the homebuyer is getting **married** to the bank. \*Shorthand for any mortgage originator.



In the originate-to-distribute model, the banks sell the mortgage to third parties, turning the loans into a commodity like widgets on a conveyor belt. By selling the loan, the bank frees up its capital so it can turn around and finance a new mortgage. Thus, the banks have an incentive to sell (or **distribute**) mortgages fast so they can recoup the funds to sell more mortgages. By selling the loan, the bank also **distributes the risk** of default to others.



or income. And the mushrooming housing industry distorted the whole economy. Of all net job growth from 2002 to 2007, up to 40 percent was housing-sector related: mortgage brokers, appraisers, real-estate agents, call-center employees, loan officers, construction and home-improvement store workers, etc.



To make the loans easier to sell, the banks go to Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac and get **assurance** for **conforming** (or prime mortgages\*). Assurance means one of the agencies certifies that the loans are creditworthy; they also insure part of the loan in case the homeowner defaults. Before their recent nationalization, Fannie and Freddie were **government-sponsored entities** (GSEs). While anyone could buy shares in the two companies, they were also subject to federal regulation and congressional oversight. This federal role was seen as an **implicit guarantee**: While there was no explicit guarantee, all parties believed loans backed by Fannie and Freddie were absolutely safe because the government would not let the two agencies fail. This allowed them to borrow huge sums of money at extremely low rates.

\*Prime refers to the credit score of the borrower.

Banks then sold their newly acquired **assured prime** mortgage loans to **bundlers**, ranging from Fannie and Freddie to **private labels**, such as investment banks, hedge funds and **money banks** ones that hold deposits like savings and checking accounts. Bundlers pooled many mortgages with the intention of selling the payment rights to others, that is, someone else pays to receive your monthly mortgage payments.



The next step was to **securitize** the bundle (a security is a tradable asset). Much of the financial wizardry of Wall Street involves turning debts into assets. Say you're Bank of America and you sell 200 mortgages in a day. Lehman Brothers buys the loans after they are assured and **bundles** them by depositing the mortgages in a bank account — that's where the monthly payments from the 200 homeowners go. Then, a **mortgage-backed security** (MBS) is created from this bundle. An MBS is a financial product that pays a yield to the purchaser, such as a hedge fund, pension fund, investment bank, money bank, central bank and especially Fannie and Freddie. The yield, essentially an interest payment, comes from the mortgage payments.

How does it work? The homeowner keeps making monthly mortgage payments to Bank of America, which makes money from the fees from the original mortgage and gets a cut for servicing the mortgage payments, passing them on to Lehman Brothers. Lehman makes money as a bundler of the mortgages and **underwriter** of the mortgage-backed security. The purchaser of the mortgage-backed security, say, Fannie Mae, then gets paid from the bank account holding the mortgage payments.



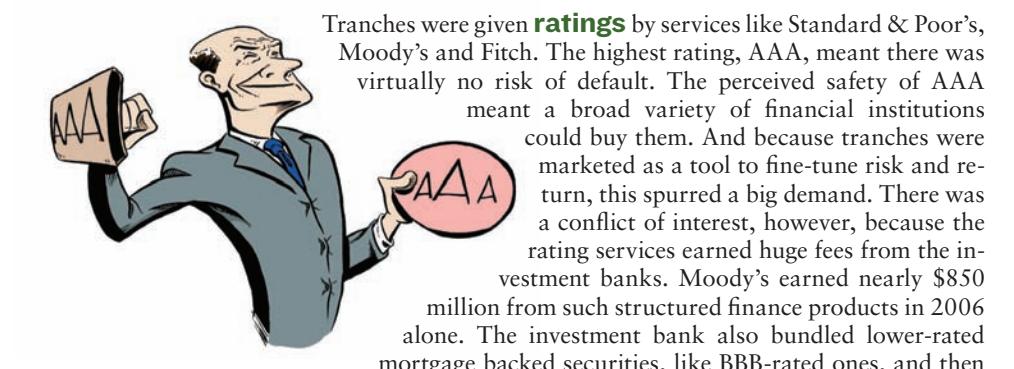
At first, this process covered only prime mortgages because Fannie and Freddie could not assure subprime loans. To address low rates of home ownership among low-income populations and communities of color, around 2004 Congress began encouraging Fannie and Freddie to start assuring subprime mortgages on a wide scale. And easy credit fed investors' appetite for more and more mortgage-backed securities, which provided funding for new mortgages.

One definition of **subprime loans** is any loan at an interest rate that is at least 3 percentage points more than a prime loan. Many of these loans were **adjustable-rate mortgages** (ARMs) with **teaser rates**. The rate was low for the first few years, but then it would **reset**, causing monthly payments to leap dramatically, sometimes to two or three times the original amount. Subprime borrowers are considered riskier to lend to because of low credit scores. Subprime borrowers are concentrated among people of color and immigrant and low-income communities, partly because racial and class disparities result in less access to banking services such as credit cards, online billing and checking and saving accounts. Bill paying becomes a labor-intensive process, making it much more likely that payments will be late or missed, driving down credit scores. With mortgage brokers and lenders pushing loans on anyone and everyone, those with less financial acumen — disproportionately low-income people, immigrants, the elderly and communities of color — often found themselves with mortgages that became unaffordable.

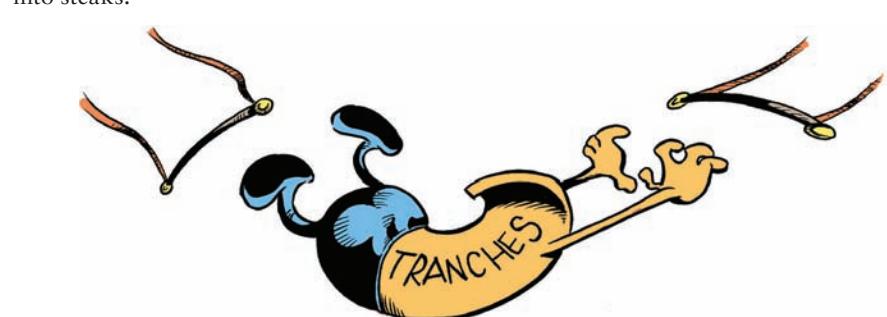
With the surge in mortgage loans, around 2004, banks started extensively using financial products called collateralized debt obligations (CDOs). The banks would either combine mortgage-backed securities they already owned or bundle large pools of high-interest subprime mortgages. CDOs were **sliced** into **tranches** — think of them as cuts of meat — that paid a yield according to risk of default: The best cuts, the filet mignon, had the lowest risk and hence paid the lowest yield. The riskiest tranches, the mystery-meat hotdogs that paid the highest yield, would default first if homebuyers stopped making payments. This was seen as a way to distribute risk across the markets. The notion of **distributing risk** means all the market players take a little risk, so if something goes bad, everyone suffers but no one dies.

BY ARUN GUPTA. ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANK REYNOSO

MAX FRAAD WOLFF consulted on and MICHELLE FAWCETT contributed to this article. DESIGN BY ANNA GOLD. COLOR BY IRINA IVANOVA. This article relied on many sources, including "The Subprime Debacle" by Karl Beitel. Monthly Review, May 2008.



Tranches were given **ratings** by services like Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch. The highest rating, AAA, meant there was virtually no risk of default. The perceived safety of AAA meant a broad variety of financial institutions could buy them. And because tranches were marketed as a tool to fine-tune risk and return, this spurred a big demand. There was a conflict of interest, however, because the rating services earned huge fees from the investment banks. Moody's earned nearly \$850 million from such structured finance products in 2006 alone. The investment bank also bundled lower-rated mortgage backed securities, like BBB-rated ones, and then sliced them to create new tranches rated from AAA to junk. This was like turning the hotdogs into steaks.



Furthermore, the banks would **hedge** the tranches, another way of distributing risk, by purchasing **credit default swaps** (CDSs) sold by companies like AIG and MBIA. The swaps were a form of insurance. This was seen as a way to make tranches more secure and hence higher rated. For instance, say you're Goldman Sachs and you have \$10 million in AAA tranches. You go to AIG to insure it, and the company determines that the risk of default is extremely low so the premium is 1 percent. So you pay AIG \$100,000 a year and if the tranche defaults, the company pays you \$10 million. But CDSs started getting bought and sold all over the world based on perceived risk. The market grew so large that the underlying debt being insured was \$45 trillion — nearly the same size as the annual global economy!



Also around 2004, things began to get even trickier when investment banks set up entities known as **structured investment vehicles** (SIVs). The SIVs would purchase subprime MBSs from their sponsoring banks. But to purchase these MBSs, the structured investment vehicles needed funds of their own. So the SIVs created products called **asset-backed commercial paper** (short-term debt of 1 to 90 days). **Asset-backed** means it is backed by credit from the sponsoring bank. The SIVs then sold the paper, mainly to money market funds. In this way, the SIVs generated money to purchase the mortgage-backed securities from their bank. The SIVs made money by getting high yields from the subprime MBSs they brought, while paying out low yields to the money markets that purchased the commercial paper (profiting from a spread like this is known as **arbitrage**).

Wall Street's goal was to conjure up ways to make money while not encountering any liability. It was moving everything **off-book** to the SIVs to get around rules about **leveraging**. Banks, hedge funds and others leverage by taking their **capital reserves** — actual cash or assets that can be easily turned into cash — and borrowing many times against it. For instance, Merrill Lynch had a leverage ratio of 45.8 on Sept. 26. That means that if Merrill had \$10 billion in the bank, it was playing around with \$458 billion. The Federal Reserve is supposed to regulate reserves to limit the growth of credit, but the SIVs were one method to get around this rule. More leverage also meant more risk for the bank, however, because funds could disappear quickly if a few bets went bad. This is all part of what's called the **Shadow Banking System**, meaning it gets around existing regulations.

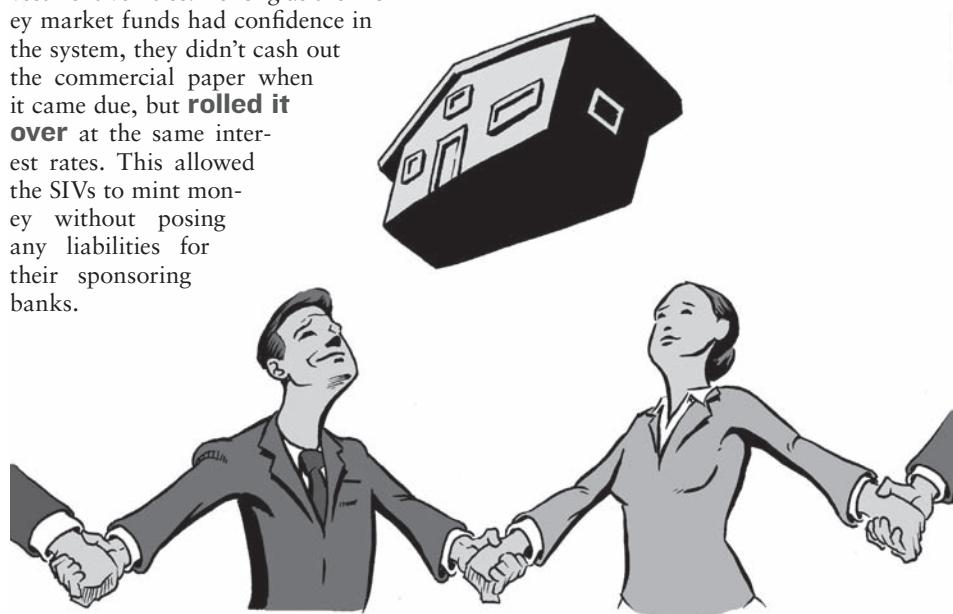


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# Economic Crash Course

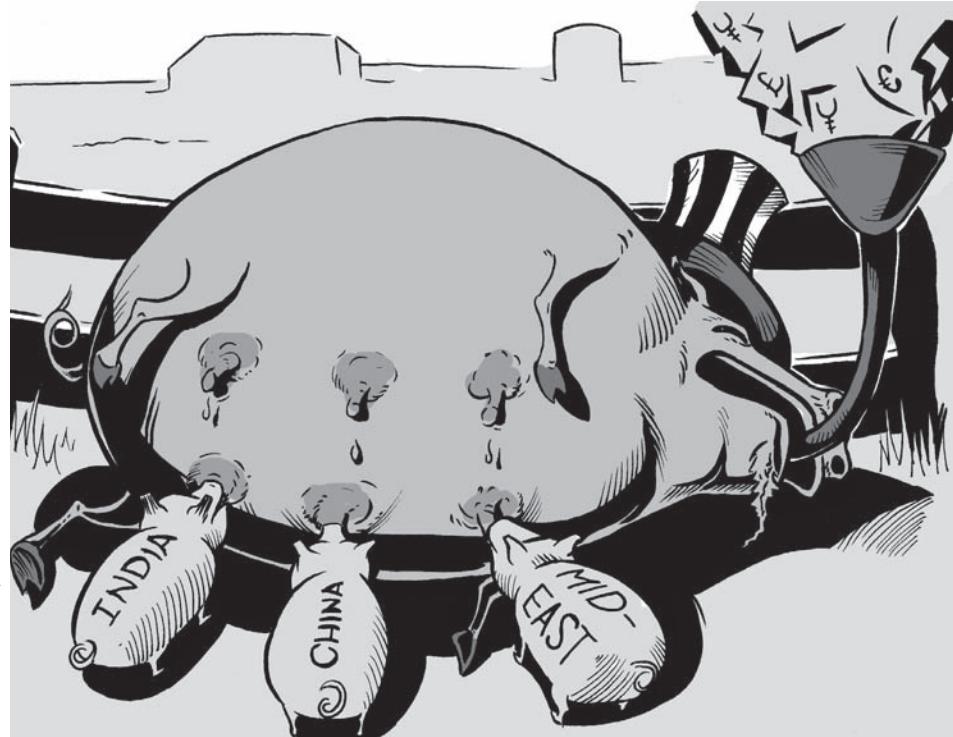
*Continued from page 11*

The whole process worked as long as everyone believed housing prices would go up endlessly. This is a form of **perceptual economics**, one principle of which is that any widely held belief in the market tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the case of housing, homeowners took on ever-larger mortgages in the belief that prices would keep rising rapidly. Mortgage lenders believed the loans were safe because even if the homeowner defaulted, the mortgage holder would be left with a house that was increasing in price. Confidence in rising prices led the creators and purchasers of mortgage-backed securities to think these investments were virtually risk-free. This also applied to over-leveraging — as long as there was easy credit and quick returns to be made, investors clamored for more mortgage-backed securities. And this applied to the money market funds that brought the paper from structured investment vehicles. As long as the money market funds had confidence in the system, they didn't cash out the commercial paper when it came due, but **rolled it over** at the same interest rates. This allowed the SIVs to mint money without posing any liabilities for their sponsoring banks.



This system kept the U.S. economy chugging along for years. For some 35 years, real wages have been stagnant for most Americans, but as house values skyrocketed over the last decade, many homeowners refinanced and cashed out the equity — turning their homes into ATMs. For example, if you owed \$200,000 on a mortgage but the house value rose to \$300,000, you could potentially turn the \$100,000 difference into cash by refinancing. By 2004, Americans were using home equity to finance as much \$310 billion a year in personal consumption. This debt-driven consumption was the engine of growth.

U.S. over-consumption was balanced by over-production in many Asian countries. Countries like China, India, Taiwan and South Korea run large trade surpluses with the United States, which speeds their economic development. They invest excess cash in U.S. credit instruments ranging from corporate debt and MBSs to government bonds and bills. It's what economists call a virtuous cycle: we buy their goods, helping them develop, while they use the profits to buy our credit, allowing us to purchase more of their goods. But it's also unsustainable. A country cannot over-consume forever.



In the final stage of the housing bubble, fewer first-time buyers could afford traditional mortgages. Rising house prices required ever-larger down payments so subprime mortgages multiplied, as they often required little or no money down. From 2004 to 2006, nearly 20 percent of all mortgage loans were subprime loans. As the vast majority were **adjustable-rate mortgages** (ARMs), this created a time bomb. The minute interest rates went up, the rates **reset**, and homeowners with ARMs were saddled with larger monthly payments.

Various factors combined to slow real-estate prices and deflate the bubble. Rising prices led to a building boom and oversupply of houses, ever-accelerating prices meant more money brought smaller returns and, once again, the Fed played a role by raising interest rates. It was trying to stave off inflation, but given the proliferation of adjustable-rate mortgages, it led to higher mortgage payments, pushing hundreds of thousands of homeowners into foreclosure.



Once the bubble started to leak, the process accelerated, turning the mania into a panic. First, the default spread to the structured debt instruments like collateralized debt obligations and mortgage-backed securities. The system of distributing risk failed. Securitization had spread across the entire financial system — investment and money banks, pension funds, central banks, insurance companies — putting everyone at risk. Because the finance sector had lobbied aggressively for decades to slash regulation, the lack of oversight amplified risk. As mortgage holders defaulted, mortgage-backed securities also began to default. The subprime funding conduit from Wall Street froze up, which led big mortgage lenders like Countrywide, New Century Financial and American Home Mortgage to go belly-up.



As panic set in, money market funds began to stop rolling over the commercial paper — they wanted to cash it out. So SIVs now had to either call on their credit line from their sponsoring banks or sell assets such as the mortgage-backed securities to raise money. Mortgage defaults and forced sales of the MBSs began to push prices down even further. This forced banks to book losses, requiring some to sell more assets to cover the losses, further lowering prices, forcing them to book more losses, creating a vicious cycle. This is known as a **liquidation trap**. Since no one was sure about the size of the losses, banks began to hoard funds, which caused the credit markets to dry up.

Over the last year, the Federal Reserve and U.S. Treasury have taken increasingly drastic measures — lowering interest rates, pumping cash into the banking sector, allowing investment banks to borrow funds while putting up low-valued securities as collateral. This then proceeded to financing takeovers, such as the Fed providing a \$29 billion credit line for JP Morgan to take over Bear Stearns in March. Then it nationalized Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac; this was followed by the federal takeover of AIG, which was done in by its gambling with credit default swaps. In the end, the legendary Wall Street banks disappeared in a fortnight — bankrupt, acquired or converted into bank holding companies like Citigroup.

But the contagion has not been contained. Whether the bailout plan can succeed is highly questionable. Many are skeptical as to whether the bailout will even restore confidence — and credit — to the banking system. As *Reuters* stated recently, "Doubts remain as to how it [the bailout plan] could immediately thaw the frozen money and credit market." Even if the bailout revives the banking sector, few economists think it will jumpstart the consumer credit machine. For one, over-leveraged, money-strapped banks will eagerly dump near-worthless securities on taxpayers in exchange for cash to bulk up their reserves. Plus, with working hours and wages declining and unemployment, home foreclosures and inflation surging, banks are in no mood to give consumers more credit, so consumption — and hence the economy — will continue to contract.

## The Economy is Dying

**Y**our national economy is dying. Credit is the blood that pumps through the veins of our economy. The banking system is the heart that pumps that blood. America is afflicted with economic heart disease resulting from decades of gorging on high credit, low wages, low regulation and debt-driven consumption. We are having a national heart attack, and the heart must be shocked back to life.

This is not a Wall Street crisis, this is an economic crisis. We are deeply, deeply in debt. We are addicted to credit. Absent action America is going to be hammered by successive waves of economic shock and pain.

This is not to say we need the Paulson Plan, but we need a plan now! The damage will be massive and painful whatever we do, but we must immediately stabilize the situation. There is no choice. Cold turkey debt withdrawal kills weak patients, creates economic havoc and generates massive costs cascading forward.

For 15 months regulators tried an escalating series of larger and larger actions. These actions slowed the pain, but ultimately they did not work.

At this point we must either use public funds to jump start the banking system or take over and run it. We need to shock the banking heart back into action and then treat our heart disease by realigning our economic lifestyle.

We substituted debt for earnings, consumption for collective action and put off our hopes, needs and dreams for a better future. Consumption won't fill the void left by community. Debt won't fill the void left by low wages. Hope will not solve your problems.

This is not a Wall Street issue. It is your future, your children's future and everything is in play.

— MAX FRAAD WOLFF

## The Road to Recovery

BY ARUN GUPTA

As *The Indpendent* goes to press, it appears Congress will pass a bailout for Wall Street. But even those who support it, many tepidly, believe it's just a bridge fund to the next presidency.

New York Times columnist Paul Krugman observes, "The real financial rescue still lies in the future, probably under the Obama administration."

So if the crisis remains, how can we fix it without flushing another \$700 billion down the drain? Despite talk that the only choice was the Paulson plan in lipstick or nothing, there were more options on the table than there are millionaires in the U.S. Senate.

Virtually every economist says the plan will work only if the U.S. Treasury overpays for mortgage-backed securities. Many, including global finance titan George Soros and economist Nouriel Roubini, who predicted this whole debacle, propose buying equity in banks requesting a bailout instead. The banks get liquidity to stay solvent while taxpayers get a stake in profits when they recover.

Progressive economist Dean Baker argues for the Federal Reserve to take over the banks.

Avery Goodman, writing on the financial website *Seeking Alpha*, contends that the Fed should be shut down because it encouraged banks to create all manner of hazardous mortgage-backed instruments and dicey mortgage loans. Goodman charges that the Fed has already overpaid a stunning \$606 billion for Wall Street trash this year.

Even if the Paulson plan works, which is a \$700 billion question, it won't boost the housing sector. UCLA Economics Professor Edward Leamer says the government should just buy mortgages directly and rent out the

houses. He calculates buying half-a-million homes for \$150 billion would revive the housing sector.

University of Texas Professor James Galbraith says we need a new Home Owners Loan Corporation that would "rewrite mortgages, manage rental conversions and decide when vacant, degraded properties should be demolished." To aid municipalities and states that are cutting services, Galbraith calls for federal revenue sharing to plug budget gaps and a national infrastructure bank to fund capital improvements.

To pay for the many bailouts thus far, former World Bank Chief Economist Joseph Stiglitz calls for a special finance sector tax, plus a reserve fund to pay for future financial folly.

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) says soak the rich by tacking a 10 percent surcharge tax on anyone earning more than \$500,000 a year. The estate tax can also be reinstated, which previously applied to those with more than \$5 million.

Some argue single-payer healthcare could hold back the foreclosure tide. High medical bills are a leading cause of bankruptcy and costly insurance premiums are a strain on millions of households. A Medicare-for-all plan would save the United States money overall and make it easier for many people to pay their monthly mortgages. Others suggest ending the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars, which would save about \$200 billion a year.

To revive a productive economy, The Service Employees International Union, *The Nation* and Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) all propose a "New New Deal" of public works that include investing in infrastructure, alternative energy and strict regulation of finance.

## IT'S HOUSING, STUPID!

BY MAX FRAAD WOLFF

**T**he housing crisis has been the elephant in the room that neither major presidential candidate will acknowledge. But now our debt sickness has moved beyond housing default into a credit crisis and financial meltdown. Millions will likely lose jobs, savings, promotions, healthcare and faith in the economy. There is no greater issue for the presidential elections and beyond.

This much we know: Housing pain continues to spread through the land. The most vulnerable — those who have subprime loans and fell victim to predatory lenders — were hit hardest and first. In a market economy vulnerability stems from bad credit, low savings and low income.

Recent data from the Mortgage Bankers Association show that prime borrowers are increasingly late and missing mortgage payments. More than half a million mortgages entered the foreclosure process between April and June of 2008. Nearly a million folks will be in or near foreclosure when the presidential election occurs.

The lack of discussion stems from the unwillingness to face the following economic realities. Since the mid-1970s, the income of the lower 60 percent of earners has been stagnant. Millions rely on rising debt, lottery tickets, house price appreciation and schemes to survive. Around 50 million people lack health insurance at any given time. College costs are rising more than 6 percent a year and students borrowed more than \$97 billion for college in 2007.

In a sharp recession, the well-connected hit up Uncle Sam first to assure their priorities are backed by taxpayer money. Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, AIG, Ford, GM and the banks have muscled their way to the trough and will likely be the best fed. This amounts to over \$300 billion in direct aid and loans, on top of the \$400 to \$500 billion annual deficit the government is running, and whatever the cost of the bailout plan that emerges. Unfortunately, the rest of us will have to hope for ample leftovers.

### WHAT IS FANNIE AND FREDDIE?

Fannie Mae was created during the Great Depression to decrease foreclosures and increase homeownership. Over its 70 years it bought, guaranteed, owned and resold mortgages, allowing more credit to be extended to more families. In 1968 Fannie was re-chartered as a public company, removed from official government status, and in 1970, Congress created Freddie as competition for Fannie. Fannie and Freddie exist to facilitate, ease and cheapen home ownership. They do this by acting as liaisons between international investors and mortgage seekers.

Fannie and Freddie buy mortgages, mix them together to sell all over the world and

guarantee repayment. This reduces risk and assures global savings flow in to support home purchases here. Trillions of dollars in bundled mortgages and mortgage guarantees were written by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

Nearly half of the \$11 trillion in U.S. mortgage debt was originated since 2001. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac either own or guarantee \$5 trillion in mortgages. As of June 30, 2007, foreign individuals and entities — including 66 Central Banks — held more than \$1.4 trillion in U.S. agency securities. Over the last few years the United States borrowed and spent about 50 percent of the available international savings.

This is unsustainable in the long run, but it worked until housing woes mounted and imbalances developed between Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac's liabilities and assets.

DANA VINDIGNI



Americans cannot pay back all they borrowed, and Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac do not have the money or power to make such assurances. Rising defaults, falling dollars and the sheer size of past mortgage borrowing are turning people off of U.S. mortgages. This led to the nationalizations of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Sept. 7, 2008. Taxpayers will now be left holding a giant bag full of the goodies.

As we commit to all sorts of aid and loans, we are pledging our future tax payments to shore up big business. This may be well worth doing, but on what basis are some firms bailed out and others allowed to die? Which jobs, pensions and health insurance plans are worth keeping? So far, regulators and senior managements meet behind closed doors and make agreements that are only partially disclosed after the fact. We are now preparing a massive bad debt buy-out fund for banks. Again, no public comment or input is being sought.

## world briefs

### MILITARY READY TO QUELL PROTESTS

The U.S. Army has deployed an active-duty unit inside the United States for the first time to serve as an on-call federal response in times of emergency. On Oct. 1, the 3rd Infantry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team was deployed under the day-to-day control of the Colorado-based Northern Command. The *Army Times* reports this new mission marks the first time an active unit has been given a dedicated assignment to Northern Command. The paper says the Army unit may be called upon to help with civil unrest and crowd control. The soldiers, many of whom have spent years in Iraq, are learning to use so-called non-lethal weapons designed to subdue unruly or dangerous individuals and crowds.

### A SURGE IN SKEPTICISM

A team of UCLA geographers have uncovered evidence that last year's drop in violence was due not to the U.S. military "surge," but to a reduction in ethnic-based conflict, which peaked shortly before the February 2007 surge. The geographers used satellite images to examine night-time light levels in Baghdad neighborhoods. They found that night light in Sunni neighborhoods declined dramatically just before the surge and never returned, while in Shiite neighborhoods, light output remained constant or increased. "By the launch of the surge, many of the targets of conflict had either been killed or fled the country, and they turned off the lights when they left," said UCLA Professor John Agnew. Said UCLA Professor Thomas Gillespie, "If the surge had truly 'worked,' we would expect to see a steady increase in night-light output over time. Instead, we found that the night-light signature diminished in certain neighborhoods, and the pattern appears to be associated with ethno-sectarian violence."

### AFGHANISTAN STARVES

While both U.S. presidential candidates suggest that military action must be refocused and intensified in Afghanistan, reports have found that the war-torn nation is facing a worsening food crisis as winter approaches. One-quarter of the population could face acute food shortages. The price of wheat has risen sharply since the beginning of the year due to export bans from Pakistan, drought and a poor spring harvest. The nation is largely dependent on food imports and other aid, which was hit hard by a rise in fuel prices this year. "It is really getting tougher and tougher as the day goes. People are hungry and angry and hungry people can do anything," said shopkeeper Abdul Mateen in the northeastern province of Badakhshan in a Sept. 29 interview with Reuters.

### U.S. ACTIVIST MURDERED

A crowd protested outside the U.S. consulate in Oaxaca, Mexico, Sept. 25, calling for justice for Marcella "Sali" Grace Eiler, a 20-year-old American human rights solidarity worker who was brutally raped and murdered. The following day, Omar Yoguez Singu, 32, was taken into custody for the murder. Activists were quick to place Eiler's murder in the context of rampant unchecked violence against women in Oaxaca. Eiler spent time in Oaxaca serving as an international human rights observer, photographer, Indymedia journalist and translator. Narco News reports she recently accompanied family members of a witness in the case of murdered New York Indymedia journalist Brad Will.

## INTERNATIONAL



### BOLIVIA ON THE BRINK:

Right-wing youth activists and other opponents of Bolivia's President Evo Morales tried to occupy a peasant market during anti-government demonstrations in the province of Tarija Sept. 10. People working in and around the market drove them away in clashes that left people wounded on both sides.

PHOTO: AGENCIA BOLIVIANA DE INFORMACION

# Right-Wing Forces Send Shock Waves Through Bolivia

BY ALEXANDER VAN SCHAICK

The battle over Bolivia's proposed new constitution worsened dramatically during September as opponents of leftist President Evo Morales ransacked government offices, sabotaged a key natural gas pipeline and massacred scores of peasants in a wave of violence intended to destabilize his government.

The Morales government and the opposition have initiated talks to resolve the crisis, but all parties remain doubtful that the effort will bear fruit. If an accord about voting on the new constitution cannot be reached, supporters on both sides will mobilize, raising the possibility of more violence.

Bolivia's latest round of turmoil followed an Aug. 10 recall referendum to decide whether President Morales and eight of the country's nine departmental prefects (governors) should finish their terms in office or not. Morales received a stunning 67 percent support nationwide and two opposition prefects from departments in the country's west were removed from office. The opposition prefects in the whiter, wealthier lowland departments of eastern Bolivia did not cease their attacks, but rather launched a coordinated assault to destabilize the national government.

Despite President Morales' change of position, the right-wing groups in the lowlands did not cease their attacks, but rather launched a coordinated assault to destabilize the national government.

The results were the worst political violence Bolivia has seen in many years: Government facilities and indigenous organizations' offices were ransacked, and a natural gas pipeline to Brazil was bombed.

Only after the worst violence hit Pando, a tropical and sparsely populated department on Bolivia's northern border, did the national government step in. According to eyewitness accounts, people in the employ of the prefect's office ambushed with rifles and automatic weapons hundreds of peasants who were heading to a meeting of the regional peasant federation, killing scores including women and children. In response, Morales declared a state of siege in Pando, sent in the military to restore order and arrested its prefect on charges of terrorism, murder and conspiracy.

indigenous people and small farmers.

Hoping to bypass the bottleneck in the senate, Morales approved a "Supreme Decree" after his August recall victory convoking a vote on the constitution, to the jubilation of his supporters and the outrage of the opposition.

Immediately, civic leaders and prefect offices in the lowlands called for civil disobedience, while right-wing youth groups scaled up their attacks on indigenous people and supporters of the president.

In the meantime, Bolivia's National Electoral Court ruled that the president cannot authorize a referendum through decree and that only congress can convoke referendums. Morales then backpedaled and stated he would respect the court's decision and try to force the opposition in the senate to give the go ahead.

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### A RELUCTANCE TO USE FORCE

The Morales government's reluctance to use force in putting down the rebellion could come from a number of directions. First, Bolivia still lives in the shadow of the "Gas War," a popular uprising in October 2003 to block the government of Gonzales "Goni" Sanchez de Lozada from implementing a corporate give-away natural gas export deal.

Just before resigning, President Sanchez de Lozada repressed the protests, leaving more than 60 demonstrators killed in the streets. The massacre effectively delegitimized state violence and subsequent governments have hesitated to use force to put down unrest.

Second, the Bolivian state is historically weak, particularly in the eastern departments. The Morales government cannot count on state institutions to have the capacity to enforce the rule of law in the lowlands, which gives the autonomy movement a relatively free hand to bully government representatives and terrorize those in the pro-Morales social movements.

Lastly, although military commanders have remained loyal to the government thus far, some speculate whether they would remain so if Morales called out the troops to repress the autonomy dissidents.

In the midst of the violence, President Morales expelled Phillip Goldberg, the beleaguered U.S. ambassador to Bolivia, accusing him of fomenting the country's unrest. The government pointed to meetings between Goldberg and two opposition prefects and U.S. funding of opposition groups through the U.S. Agency for International Development and other agencies as evidence of U.S. meddling in Bolivian affairs. Ambassador Goldberg's expulsion is the culmination of a rocky relationship with the Morales government since he took the job in 2006.

Dialogue between the national government and the opposition prefects began over the last two weeks. According to reports, progress has been made on side issues but not on the central issues of departmental autonomy and the new constitution.

Meanwhile, peasant and indigenous groups have given the president and the opposition until mid-November to hammer out an agreement. For these organizations, the new constitution represents years of struggle and must go to a national vote at any cost. If the Morales government fails to negotiate an accord, the Bolivian senate will face tremendous pressure from mobilizations aimed at forcing them to allow the constitutional referendum to go forward.

For a longer version of this article, see [indypendent.org](http://indypendent.org).

# Starting Fresh

## ECUADOR LAUNCHES NEW ERA AFTER APPROVING LEFTIST CONSTITUTION

BY DANIEL DENHIR

QUITO, Ecuador—Ecuador approved a new constitution on Sept. 28 with a 64 percent “yes” vote, scoring a major victory for President Rafael Correa. Correa hailed the results, saying that “today Ecuador has decided on a new country.” Constitutional provisions expand access to healthcare, social security and education while increasing state control over the economy.

Nearly 10 million Ecuadorians came out to vote — voting is obligatory — and the atmosphere was tranquil. Families quietly walked into polling places and quickly walked out. The only lines in Quito were at the ubiquitous food stands selling roast pork or sugar cane juice.

The vote on the constitution was also very much a referendum on Correa’s presidency. Correa has maintained high approval ratings by seizing the property of elites responsible for a severe 1999 banking crisis, increasing public assistance funding and terminating the U.S. lease on the coastal military base in Manta. Staying in office is no small feat in a country where popular mobilizations, fueled by opposition to Washington-backed free-market economic policies, have overthrown three presidents since 1997.

The vote was a major blow to an already fragmented opposition. The Catholic Church and evangelicals bolstered the weakened traditional political parties’ “no” campaign, charging that the constitution would legalize abortion and gay marriage. While the new constitution does legalize same sex civil unions, there is no indication that it will allow for restrictions on abortion to be relaxed. Bishops allied with the extreme right-wing Opus Dei, led by Archbishop Antonio Arregui, control the church hierarchy. But the leadership’s position provoked widespread resistance among progressive lay activists and clergy who are powerful in many parts of the heavily Catholic country.

Business leaders also criticized the constitution, saying that it would give the state ex-

cessive control over the economy and endow the president with authoritarian powers.

In a serious upset, nearly 50 percent of the residents in the opposition stronghold of Guayaquil appear to have supported the constitution. The port city, like much of the coast, has long been controlled by export-oriented business owners.

Mayor Jaime Nebot, allied with the conservative Social Christian Party, has been Correa’s most high-profile opponent. Nebot had threatened to resign if the “yes” vote won in Guayaquil, urging his supporters to reject the proposal. It seems doubtful he will follow through on his threat, however, as he continues to enjoy high approval ratings. In his victory speech, Correa called for national unity and said that he was open to a dialogue with Nebot.

Most social movements supported the constitution, pointing to expanded indigenous rights, social welfare policies and environmental protections. But Correa has also come into increasing conflict with the country’s left, which charges that his radical discourse is mere window dressing. Led by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), the left is unhappy with Correa’s support for large-scale mining and other policies that they see as too friendly to big business and foreign investors.

The conflict recently intensified when former Assembly Member Monica Chuji disaffiliated from Correa’s Alianza País party. Chuji is an indigenous activist and was Correa’s spokeswoman before her election to the Constituent Assembly, the body that drafted the constitution. And in late September, CONAIE President Marlon Santi warned of an indigenous uprising against mining activities. He stated that indigenous and anti-mining organizations will meet in the southern highlands city of Cuenca on Oct. 13 to discuss potential actions.

And in a surprise move, Correa on Sunday publicly appeared with former President of the Constituent Assembly and longtime social movement ally Alberto Acosta. Acosta and Correa had a falling out in June over procedural matters and substantial political differences. But with Correa empowered and the traditional right weakened, it is unclear whether social movements will be successful in reasserting an independent political project.

Daniel Denvir is editor-in-chief of *caterwaulquarterly.com*. This article was originally published on *upsidedownworld.org*.

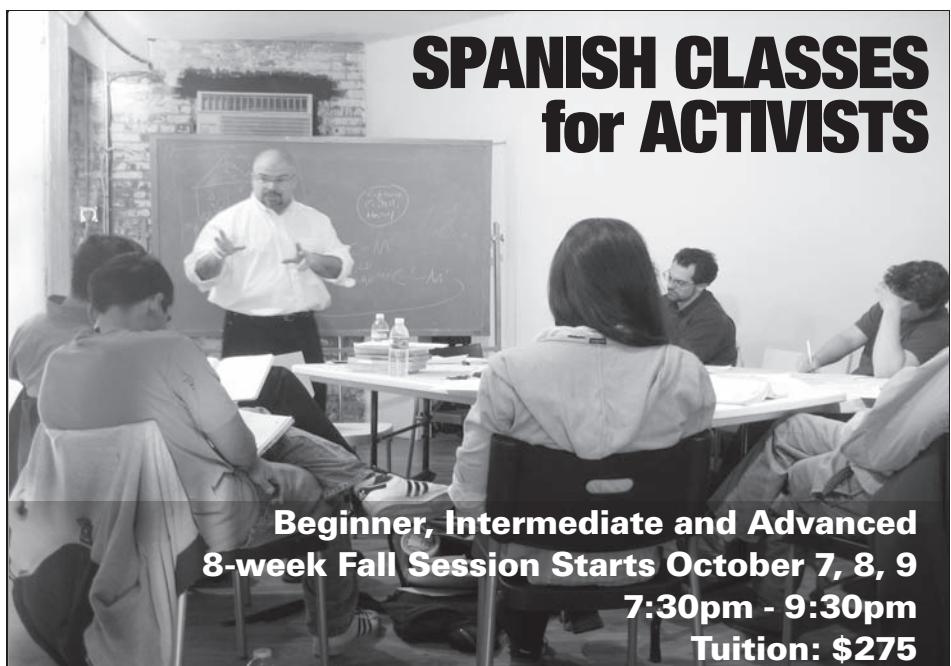
**VOTING FOR CHANGE:** Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa greets supporters in April 2007 after voters approved the establishment of a constituent assembly to rewrite the nation’s constitution. PHOTO: CBC.CA

## Bordering on a Humanitarian Crisis



**RELIEF ON THE BORDER:** Humanitarian aid volunteers Jason Odhner and Gilberto Flores hand water bottles to thirsty migrants within sight of the U.S. border in outskirts of the Mexican city of Nogales, Sonora, in the summer of 2007. No More Deaths, a humanitarian aid organization based in Tucson, Ariz., has supported three aid stations in border cities that receive deported migrants dropped off at the ports of entry by U.S. Department of Homeland Security/Border Patrol officials. More than 350,000 migrants have received food, water and medical care at the aid stations since 2006. A delegation of No More Deaths volunteers spoke at a congressional briefing hosted by Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) in Washington, D.C., Sept. 17 regarding human rights abuses of migrants in short-term custody by U.S. Border Patrol. Humanitarian aid workers staffing the stations heard stories from migrants of abusive treatment during their apprehension, transportation and processing by Border Patrol. More than 400 individual accounts of abuse documented over the past two years have been compiled into a new report, “Crossing the Line.” The report can be found online at [nomoredeaths.org](http://nomoredeaths.org). PHOTO: MARYADA VALLET

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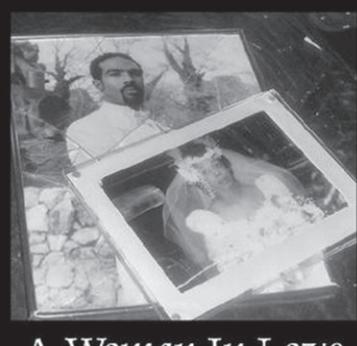
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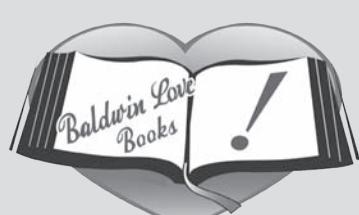
By C. Dale Baldwin

C. DALE BALDWIN



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## INTERNET JUSTICE

# Digital Gold up for Grabs

BY JOSHUA BREITBART

In late October, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will decide on an issue that could completely change how you talk on the phone and connect to the Internet. They are weighing what to do with the "white spaces," which are unused TV channels and spaces in between channels.

Those spaces originally helped keep television signals from interfering with each other. That is why in New York we have channels 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, and so forth. There were open channels, or "white spaces," on 3, 6, 8, 10, 12.

With the switch to digital television (DTV), which every broadcaster must do by Feb. 17, 2009, the signals do not need as much padding to keep from interfering. The freed up space is a digital dividend.

The government already auctioned off most of this dividend to Verizon and AT&T, but the smaller white spaces in between active channels are a little harder to use.

Still, those small spaces can add up. After the DTV transition, one-fifth of the available channels in New York City will be vacant, according to a study by the media reform organization Free Press. And New York has

to be unfounded. The FCC is currently conducting tests to ensure that white space devices would not interfere with other signals.

Others who use these airwaves without a license, like Broadway shows and music venues that rely on wireless microphones, who are currently operating illegally, would like to become authorized, protected users.

At the hearing advocates for expanded access to the Internet, including NYCwireless, Wireless Harlem, The Ethos Group, Free Press and Common Cause, criticized the resolution. There is no word yet on when the Committee will vote on it.

FCC certification of white space devices is the most significant step we could take towards closing the digital divide, and it wouldn't cost us a dime — or, rather, it would cost us a dime less than what we're paying now for Internet access and cell phone service.

Wireless access is not a full replacement for wired connections, but it is a much cheaper way to bring people the Internet. Mobile phones are far more widespread than in-home computers with broadband connections, especially among the groups currently marginalized from the Internet. According to the Pew Internet and American



**RECLAIMING PUBLIC AIRWAVES:** Dharma Dailey of The Ethos Group and Michael Lewis of the Wireless Harlem initiative tout the benefits of white space technology at a City Council hearing Sept. 29. The switch to digital television in February 2009 will free up space on the airwaves, which many feel should be reserved as non-licensed public space to connect millions of new people to the Internet at cheaper rates. PHOTO: KRISTOFER RIOS

among the most crowded airwaves in the country. The available space in smaller cities and rural areas is far larger.

If we opened up this part of the airwaves for portable, low-power devices — in rural areas, it could be fixed, higher-powered signals — we could connect millions of new people to the Internet for far less than what we now pay. In a city like New York, those portable devices could even take the place of our expensive, never-quite-work-how-you-want-them-to cellular phones.

The City Council Committee on Technology in Government held a hearing on white spaces Sept. 29 to consider a resolution urging the FCC to hold back from opening white space devices.

Current license holders like TV broadcasters don't want to share the airwaves. They paint a fearful picture of white space devices interfering with TV signals and wireless microphones used for film and TV production.

They used the same "ocean of interference" canard to limit low-power radio licensing in 2000, until an FCC study showed the claim

Life Project, African Americans and English-speaking Hispanics are more likely than white Americans to use cell phones or other hand-held communication devices to access the Internet.

Once you don't have to rely on big, corporate license-holders to get a connection, you can start to invent entirely new devices and applications. The FCC used the same kind of open platform for innovation with the 2.4 gigahertz band. That led to an astounding array of inventions — cordless phones, remote controls, microwave ovens, and wi-fi routers — all sharing one tiny piece of the airwaves.

With access to the white spaces, the sky's the limit.

For more information and to learn what you can do to open the airwaves, visit [speakandlisten.net](http://speakandlisten.net).

*Joshua Breitbart is the Policy Director for People's Production House, a national media education organization based in New York City. [peoplesproductionhouse.org](http://peoplesproductionhouse.org).*

## REVIEWS

### THE A-STRING Purple Haze

'Scuse Me While I Kiss the Sky  
By DAVID HENDERSON  
UPDATED EDITION. ATRIA, 2008

I Have Fun Everywhere I Go  
By MIKE EDISON  
FABER AND FABER, 2008

Nostalgia gets on my nerves. I've been to too many punk-rock shows where kids walk around in the T-shirts of bands that broke up before they were born, recycling costumes and musical formulas that were very well worn 20 years ago. You can never relive history, but you can buy all the artifacts and refine the poses.

On the other hand, you need to know your history, which brings me to two recent rock 'n' roll books. One is David Henderson's reissued Jimi Hendrix biography *'Scuse Me While I Kiss the Sky*. It traces Hendrix's life from his childhood in Seattle through backing Little Richard and the Isley Brothers on the chitlin' circuit, scuffling for freedom in the coffeehouses of the protohippie Village, going to England in 1966, and international psychedelic stardom until his death in 1970.

Henderson, a Lower East Side poet, knows how to flow, vividly trying to approximate the feel of the music in words — "the clave chord kicks off the guitar battery again. Sounding like the rhythms of several African congas, the electronic metallic overdriving oscillating Stratocaster keeps the rhythm throb close to the pulsations of a red emergency light." And he knows Hendrix's world, the Afro-American side of the 1960s counterculture, intimately.

The new introduction, however, is the most dubious part. Henderson argues that Hendrix did not die of a drug overdose, but was murdered. The ambulance drivers who picked him up said he was covered in puked-up red wine, from which Henderson concludes, "he was drowned."

A far more plausible scenario, in all accounts cited by Henderson, is that Hendrix was severely stressed and depressed in the last few months of his life. "After a while your bullets don't even cause me pain," he'd sung on "Machine Gun." A manager who'd signed him for a dollar in 1965 had sued him and won the rights to the *Band of Gypsies* live album, Hendrix's then current and most political record. (Hendrix's personal politics mixed commitment to nonviolence with support for the Black Panthers.) The last show he did, a week and a half before he died, was at a German rock festival where three people were murdered and a roadie shot in the leg. They then cancelled the tour because bassist Billy Cox, Hendrix's oldest and steadiest friend, had suffered

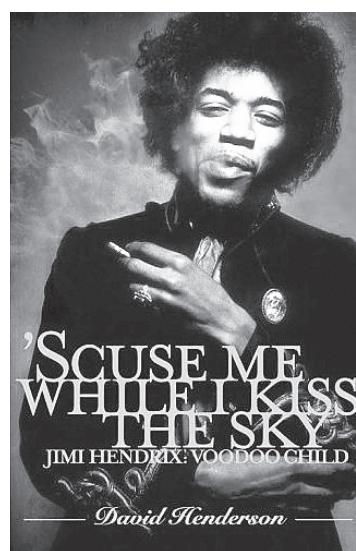
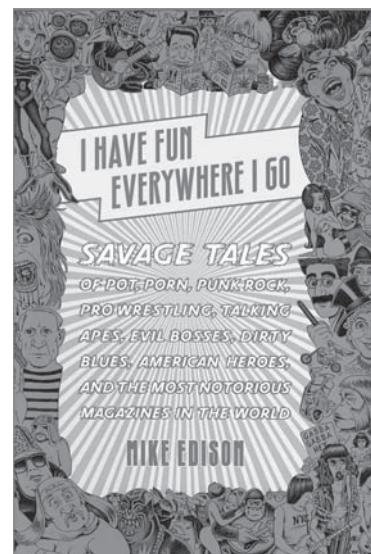
a nervous breakdown after being dosed with LSD. And the night of his death, he'd gone to a party and had a screaming match with his girlfriend. She told investigators he'd taken up to nine sleeping pills when he got home.

So would it not be more likely that Hendrix came home drunk, swallowed a bunch of pills, and then puked up the lot and choked to death? The ambulance drivers quoted by Henderson say no one was there when they arrived, which implies a different damning scenario: that most of Hendrix's entourage, including his girlfriend, were more concerned about keeping themselves out of trouble than they were about getting him medical help.

Methinks Henderson doth protest too much. He's got the noble aim of trying to assert Jimi Hendrix's credibility as a musical genius, not just another dead dopefiend. But no one who knows anything about electric guitar questions Hendrix's genius. He played with a unique fusion of psychedelic abandon, technical skill, and deep blues roots; pioneered the sonic vocabulary of guitar distortion; and did things no guitarist has yet duplicated. His influence stretches from metal to P-Funk to Nas. If he'd lived, he would have likely collaborated with Miles Davis, who was then cutting landmarks of electric jazz. And although Hendrix's drug intake was considerable, he wasn't a heroin addict or alcoholic like Hank Williams, Billie Holiday or Charlie Parker, all of whom have secure places in the pantheon of 20th century American musical geniuses.

**Written with the bravado of a bad-guy wrestler, *I Have Fun* is self-aggrandizing as fuck and not 100 percent accurate, but it's a highly entertaining read.**

Mike Edison's memoir, *I Have Fun Everywhere I Go*, isn't exclusively a rock 'n' roll book, but it's close enough. Edison was the drummer for the bluesy garage-punk of New York's Raunch Hands and Spain's Pleasure Fuckers and did a stint with shit-on-stage shock-rocker G.G. Allin, who he says was smarter than people knew. For money and other



thrills, he worked at some of "the world's most notorious magazines," including *High Times*, *Screw*, *Heeb*, and various porn, wrestling, and beer-trade titles.

Written with the bravado of a bad-guy wrestler, *I Have Fun* is self-aggrandizing as fuck and not 100 percent accurate, but it's a highly entertaining read. Edison skewers nearly everyone on the *High Times* staff, from the viciously stingy business manager to the conspiracy-nut editor-in-chief, who had "hideously morphed" from a visionary idealist into a sanctimonious bully who "would babble on incoherently about CIA plots, stoner reality shows he was going to make millions from, and his dream of moving the *High Times* office to Woodstock." (I worked there too. He says I looked "like some sort of mad scientist who had blown himself up

in a failed chemistry experiment" but often got drowned out because I "didn't share the pot-fueled delusions of grandeur the other editors were infected with." Fair enough.)

Like I said, it sometimes has more ego than fact. Edison casts himself as the hero trying to be rebellious and outrageous and still make money, but he was far from immune to the power trips that afflicted the *High Times* hierarchy. He mocks the news staff for complaining when ads bumped their "updates on Michigan hemp activists" — but those Michigan hemp activists were Tom Crosslin and Rollie Rohm, killed by the FBI and state police in September 2001 after a long feud with the local Christian-right prosecutor.

I got along with Edison a lot better after he was no longer my boss, and we could bond over our tastes for cheap old guitars and raw blues. Hey, Mike, if you're reading this, you still got my *Live on Maxwell Street CD*?

—STEVEN WISHNIA



### The Scars Of War

*In Conflict*  
DIRECTED BY DOUGLAS C. WAGER  
NOW PLAYING AT THE BARROW STREET THEATER

ally wounded veterans who range from national guardsmen to medics, *In Conflict* makes a strong antiwar statement without dwelling overly on geopolitics.

Fidgeting in a chair, drink in hand, former U.S. Army Private Herold Noel (Damon Williams), currently homeless and suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, recalls witnessing an army convoy running over an Iraqi baby whose mother had been mistakenly shot at a checkpoint. The unease that struck the audience then was as palpable as the guilt and rage etched on Noel's face. It immediately became clear that veterans and Iraqi civilians are in the same boat, pawns in a reckless neocon war game.

No matter their background — Mexican immigrant or Georgetown graduate — the veterans profiled in *In Conflict* are left to suffer with little government or public support, reflecting the reality of many veterans, despite repeated promises by the Bush Administration to "take care of" Iraq veterans. Meanwhile, countless others are shipped out to a conflict with no apparent end.

*In Conflict* is playing at the Barrow Street Theater, 27 Barrow St. (at Bleeker Street) through Nov. 16. 212-243-6262 or barrowstreettheatre.com

—LIANA GREY



## Mean Streets, One World

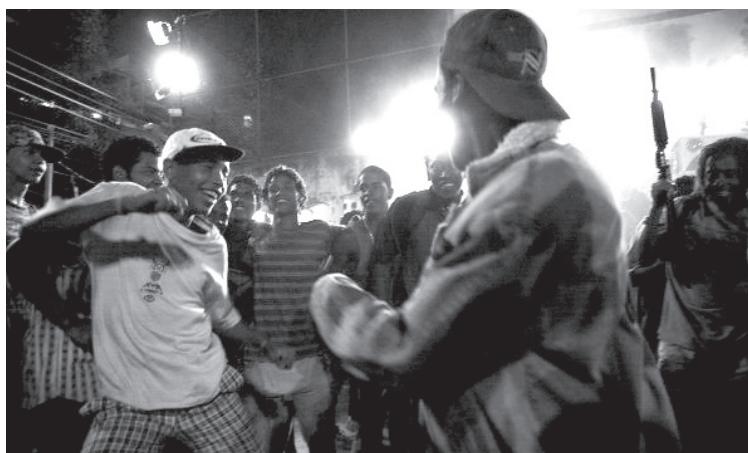
*Elite Squad ("Tropa de Elite")*  
DIRECTED BY JOSÉ PADILHA  
IFC FILMS, 2007

**E**veryone in *Elite Squad*, which won the Golden Bear at this year's Berlin Film Festival, works the system of pervasive drug trafficking that extends its stranglehold out of Rio de Janeiro's favelas to implicate even the members of BOPE (Special Police Operation Battalion), the roughest, toughest and least corruptible ranks of the city's police corps.

Narrated by Squad Captain Nascimento in the knowing voice of co-screenwriter Rodrigo Pimentel, himself a military police officer and captain for 19 years, *Elite Squad* shoots for a customized exposé feel, which makes its implicit endorsement of impunity and absolute rule as a BOPE prerogative especially disingenuous. Flashy editing and propulsive music evoke a high-octane thrill ride, laden with the requisite doses of sadistic violence and expletive-heavy dialogue that have come to pass for a standard of realism, while character development never reaches beyond advancing the plot.

The storyline itself — with the Pope's 1997 visit to Rio as Nascimento's final protective mission, his dual prospects of appointing a successor and becoming a father, the split between the brainy do-gooder Matias and the impulsive enforcer Neto as best friends and main candidates to succeed him — feigns mythical grandeur, but comes across forced and schematic. Filmmaker José Padilha tries to make *Elite Squad* into a Brazilian *Miami Vice* (2005), yet neither its shallow scope nor its artificial intensity hold a candle to Michael Mann's masterwork — perhaps the single truly globalist film to date.

A few months ago David Denby proposed in *The New Yorker* that French director Olivier Assayas has with his last couple of films — *Demonlover* (2002) and *Boarding Gate* (2008) — "distilled a new genre — the vicious globalist thriller." Assayas' groundless, boundless films are decidedly unpleasant and numbing in their lack of moral consciousness, let



## The Great Divide

*This Land is Their Land*  
BY BARBARA EHRENREICH  
METROPOLITAN BOOKS, 2008

**M**ost of the 62 essays in *This Land is Their Land* are op-eds previously published in the *New York Times*, *The Progressive*, *The Nation* or on Ehrenreich's blog. But even if you've read them before, they're still a poke in the ribs to get us off our duffs and into the streets.

The growing class divide is a recurring source of irritation to Ehrenreich and she brilliantly hones in on the excesses of those on the highest economic rungs. In "Children Deserve Veterinary Care Too," she reports that in 2007 Americans spent \$10 billion on medical care, including CT scans, MRIs, dialysis, chemotherapy, and underwater treadmills for Fido, Fluffy and Fredericka the ferret. While no one is suggesting animal cruelty, Ehrenreich posits the notion that something is radically wrong when some folks can shell out a fortune to treat ailing pets while others live in households where kids die from treatable illnesses because their families can't afford to take them to a doctor.

"In many ways, children stack up well compared with common pets," Ehrenreich quips. "They can shed real tears, like Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs. They can talk as well as any of the larger birds ... And if you invest enough in their care and feeding, they will jump all over you, yipping and covering your face with drool, when you arrive at the door."

Humor and wit are in abundance here, but the overall message is bleak: At the same time that a small number of corporate big-wigs have embraced a level of extravagance last seen during the Roman Empire, ever-escalating costs for healthcare, housing, food, fuel and college have enfeebled the working classes. Ehrenreich calls it an "explosion of gluttony at the top," and like all gluttony, it is sickening.

Indeed, the juxtaposition of three billion people worldwide who live on less than \$2 a day with those taking private planes to exclusive resorts in the Galapagos Islands is mind boggling. Ehrenreich relentlessly hammers the point that such chasms are immoral. She zooms in on corporate giants like Wal-Mart — famous for paying workers so little that they qualify for Medicaid and food stamps — as promoters of the rift and is apoplectic that the store's underpaid workers can't afford the schlock displayed in its aisles.

She also skewers job outsourcing, the Religious Right's preoccupation with gay marriage, gentrification, the torture of Iraqi prisoners, immigrant scapegoating and the idiocy of spending \$100 million a year on abstinence training. In a hilarious interview with Joneen Mackenzie, executive director of the pro-abstinence group, Why Am I Tempted? (Yes, the acronym is WAIT), Ehrenreich quotes Mackenzie as saying that she, herself, is not abstinent and actually behaves "like an animal" when fulfilling her wifely duties.

Ehrenreich feigns dismay. "Abstinence training should be restricted to abstinent people," she tongue-in-cheekily concludes. "Would you undergo computer training with someone who hasn't touched a computer since 1987? Would you hire a flabby, out-of-shape personal fitness trainer?"

The cliché that you laugh until you cry takes

on new meaning when reading *This Land is Their Land*. Incisive, trenchant and furious, it celebrates the have-nots. At the same time, it asks an important question: What will it take for America's beleaguered residents to rise up and say, "Enough"? At one time in history, people believed songwriter Woody Guthrie's assertion the American landscape belonged to those whose labor sustained it. "How many wake-up calls do we need?" Ehrenreich asks. The answer should be obvious.

—ELEANOR J. BADER

BARBARA EHRENREICH  
THIS  
LAND  
~~THEIR~~  
IS OUR  
LAND

REPORTS FROM A DIVIDED NATION



alone conscience. They present a lifelessly buzzing universe, with every uninteresting individual's guilt reduced to a vacuum. These flicks are merely blasé, though, compared to the genuine viciousness of the tradition of 'embracing global issue' films spearheaded by Steven Soderbergh's *Traffic* (2000) and including *Crash* (Paul Haggis, 2004), *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006), *City of God* (Fernando Meirelles, 2002) and *City of Men* (Paulo Morelli, 2007) — the latter two obvious influences on *Elite Squad*, which was co-written by *City of God's* Oscar-winning screenwriter Braulio Mantovani.

By now a critically and commercially bankable franchise, this type of movie latches on to a ubiquitous social plague — drugs, racism, terrorism — and contrives to exhibit how it cuts across social boundaries to involve us all. The moral implication of such a connection is to exculpate any party from personal responsibility within a global system that operates beyond our control. "We are all victims," the underlying mantra of false solidarity echoes, and in that knowledge we can complacently refrain from engaging in acts that resist the hegemony of corporate capitalism.

The key supporting principle here is the erasure of micro-cultural difference in favor of monolithic macro-cultural commonality: whichever ethnicity-, religion-, family-, state- or class-based ties bind us and make us belong to a specific sense of place, deep down we citizens of the world are all the same, decent, well-meaning people. Ironically, this discourse surfaces because, objectively speaking, our only universally shared status is in our function as largest common denominators of the capitalist enterprise sustaining the problems the genre addresses. To resist this ideological closed circuit means to firmly localize the plight of displacement caused by the globalizing condition, to identify it first and foremost as a crisis of living space.

Exactly therein lies the accomplishment of Rodrigo Plá's *La zona*, one of the highlights of this year's New Directors/New Films Festival, which details how a gat-

ed community in Mexico City is penetrated by a few intrepid, opportunistic young looters from the poor surrounding neighborhoods and becomes a mantrap for one of the intruders. A gratingly honest parable of vigilante security dovetailing with mob rule, Plás' film imbues dystopian paranoia motifs from other movies with an eerily commonplace feel that boils down to articulating the entrenched capitalist divide between haves and have-nots in terms of radical spatial demarcation.

*Elite Squad*, by contrast, has the drug economy conjoin a privileged bourgeois student body, working-class police officers and disenfranchised favela gang members without ever relating the overlapping

territorial claims of these characters to the cityscape of Rio. (In much the same way, *Crash* never bothered to integrate the dots of its spasmodic plot trajectory into the urban sprawl of Los Angeles.) Beyond the backdrop of any individual scene, they harbor no attachment to their habitat, form no part of a spatially oriented community and lack any geopolitical identity. The brutally excessive assertion of male bonding on the part of the untouchable BOPE outfit seems therefore less a fascist outgrowth of the vicissitudes of capitalism than a pathological tribalist tendency that, like the film itself, has all the integrity of an empty ritual.

—KENNETH CRAB

## READER COMMENTS

*Continued from page 2*

Right now we are paying for the big signal, but not really using it to draw in enough listeners. That is an untenable course. One fact-correction: WBAI's budget in FY08 called for \$3.9 million in income (not \$2.4 million).

—JAMIE ROSS, WBAI LOCAL STATION BOARD, LISTENER DELEGATE, PACIFICA RADIO BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Right on! The fact is that listeners left in droves over the last six years — no sane person can be involved in WBAI at this stage. Between loonie Black nationalists, 9/11 deniers and quack health nuts, its over. The Listener Station Board (LSB) meetings are farcical — North Korean-style zombies vs. idealogs from the 1960s and between them they have half a brain cell when it comes to

a) RADIO, b) FINANCE. Solution: remove all the paid air staff and start over with new people mostly under 40 years of age. That way WBAI might have a chance. With the current "programmers" it's curtains.

—EX-LISTENER

When the WBAI was all white, people never complained about white supremacy and white nationalism. But now that some black people are there and airing

—DADDY INSIDER

WBAI is my station. It's democracy and that's not always pretty. Learning as we/they all "go." I don't like every program, every LSB board member, but I love WBAI. I get what I need. Fundraising is a problem. Okay, it's been a long, hard (but I do stress long) success story. Power battles go on and on. Yet, I'm optimistic. Why? There's a hard core of listeners who want the station to continue. And new listeners to be found.

—SANDA

### TURN UP THE HEAT

*Response to "The Macktivist: Trash*

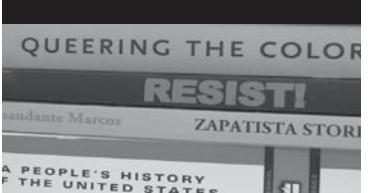
*the World Can Handle," Sept. 12:*

I found the hottest corset for my girl on Sept. 14, 2001. After the attacks on the WTC, when everything south of 14th Street was shut down, the stores all had 80 to 90 percent off liquidations sales. There was an old-school black corset with serious strappage that went for \$500 retail, and I picked up for \$75. Many nights of decadence were enjoyed. On the cheap, aside from the Osama Bin Laden Sale? Good luck. Cheap corsets don't actually work, and the materials will be more uncomfortable than they are by design. You also forgot to mention that Babeland has an well-chosen, relatively affordable collection of gear like chokers, collars and other bondage gear. Much cheaper than Trash and Vaudeville, which sells overpriced junk. They do have a fine selection of fetish shoes and hip boots. Also try Purple Passion (in Chelsea) where the pro-doms shop. Those year-round halloween shops have surprises.

—FUEGO FUEGO

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The Word-of-Mouth Series offers a bimonthly dose of fiction and poetry. Hear from Darcie Dennigan, Justine Manzano, Kathleen Miller and Matt Reeck.

**Fri Oct 10, 7PM • Free**

**READING: SAVANNAH KNOOP "GIRL BOY**

**GIRL."** Come out and meet Knoop and hear her story of passing for a boy wunderkind on the world stage.

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**READING: MICHELLE SEWELL "JUST LIKE**

**A GIRL."** Join a host of the contributors to *Just Like A Girl: A Manifesto*, a new anthology edited by Michelle Sewell.

*Congratulations!*

Amy Wolf &  
Bennett Baumer

OCTOBER 4, 2008

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Mercer St. Books

206 Mercer St.

Jefferson Market Branch

Library

Sixth Ave. & 9th St.

Kim's Video

6 St. Mark's Place

Brecht Forum

451 West St.

4th Street Food Co-op

58 E. 4th St

Theater for the New City

155 First Ave.

### 14<sup>TH</sup> TO 96<sup>TH</sup> ST.

Manhattan Neighborhood Network

537 W. 59th St.

Housing Conservation

Coordinators

777 Tenth Ave.

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106th St. & Lexington

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### BROOKLYN

Brooklyn Museum

200 Eastern Pkwy

BAM

30 Lafayette Ave.

Vox Pop

1022 Cortelyou Rd.

Tillie's of Brooklyn

248 DeKalb Ave.

Tea Lounge

Union St. & 7th Ave.

Ozzie's Coffee Shop

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57 7th Ave.

Verb Café

Bedford Ave. & N. 5th St.

Videology

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Sisters Community Hardware

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Pacific St. Library

25 Fourth Ave.

Clear Spin Laundromat

192 Myrtle Ave.

123 Infoshop

123 Tompkins St.

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Weeksville Heritage Center

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Terraza Café

40-19 Glean St., Elmhurst

Café Aubergine

49-22 Skillman Ave.

Flushing

### BRONX

The Point

940 Garrison Ave.

Brook Park

141st St. & Brook Ave.

Mothers on the Move

928 Intervale St.

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Melrose Ave. & 157th St.

### STATEN ISLAND

St. George Library

5 Central Ave.

Port Richmond Branch Library

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208 Bay St.

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14 Zariskie St.

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The Spa Restaurant

74 Hudson St.

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FINDING ANSWERS  
FOR HUNGER  
AND POVERTY



Food crisis.

# Step Up to the Plate: ENDING THE FOOD CRISIS

#### SPONSORED BY:

WHY (World Hunger Year), in partnership with Food First,

National Family Farm Coalition, Grassroots International, Pesticide Action Network of North America, Agricultural Missions, Food & Water Watch, Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Small Planet Institute, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1500, Rainforest Action Network.

#### SUPPORTERS:

Food Systems Network NYC, Community Food Security Coalition, New York Citizens Trade Coalition, World Neighbors, Global Policy Forum, Anna Lappé, Take a Bite Out of Climate Change, Edible Manhattan, Hunger Action Network of New York State, Sustainable Table, New York City Nutrition Education Network, Sustainable Connections, Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle of NY, The FGE Food & Nutrition Team, Cornell Global Labor Institute, and others.

**WORLD FOOD DAY**  
**Thursday, October 16**  
**7pm**

**Great Hall of the Cooper Union**

**7 E. 7th Street (at 3rd Ave.)**

**Manhattan**

**FREE (suggested donation at the door)**

**whyhunger.org**

As U.S. food pantries face long lines and empty shelves and food protests rock the globe, it is clear that we are in the midst of a food crisis at home and abroad. The crisis is long in the making, yet even as it hits both headlines and wallets, it has been largely ignored by the current administration and the presidential candidates. In response, food, farm, labor, and justice organizations from across the United States are joining together to call on our leaders to address the roots of the problem.

Join WHY and our partners at the historic Great Hall of the Cooper Union for the national launch of an urgent Call to Action to end the food crisis. Learn about the real causes and solutions to the crisis from special guests including:

**FRANCES MOORE LAPPE**

*Best-selling author of Diet for a Small Planet*

**RAJ PATEL**

*Author of Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*

**BEN BURKETT**

*President of the National Family Farm Coalition*

**LADONNA REDMOND**

*President of the Institute for Community Resource Development*

**PAT PURCELL**

*United Food and Commercial Workers International Union*

**LEADERS OF THE COALITION  
OF IMMOKALEE WORKERS**

*... Musical guests pending confirmation*

**RSVP (encouraged): [whyevents@whyhunger.org](mailto:whyevents@whyhunger.org). Seating is first come, first served.**  
**If your organization would like to support this event, please email [whyevents@whyhunger.org](mailto:whyevents@whyhunger.org)**